

# the MENA Report

ANALYSIS & INSIGHTS  
FROM THE **ARAB WORLD**

الشرق الأوسط وشمال أفريقيا



مؤسسة قرطبة  
*The Cordoba Foundation*  
*Cultures in Dialogue.*

MEDIA PARTNER



[www.mdukmedia.com](http://www.mdukmedia.com)

## IN THIS ISSUE...

UNDER THE SHADOW OF THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD  
MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD - HISTORIC OVERVIEW  
EXPANSION BEYOND EGYPT  
MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD IN THE WEST  
INTERVIEW WITH ANAS ALTIKRITI  
CASE STUDY - IRAQI ISLAMIC PARTY AND ITS BRITISH CONNECTION

# ABOUT THE MENA REPORT

*The MENA Report*, published monthly by The Cordoba Foundation, provides unique insights and analysis of events and developments in the Middle East and North Africa. Seeking to provide impartial, accurate and authoritative content and analysis, we do this through The Cordoba Foundation's unique access to rare and highly important primary sources in the Middle East and beyond.

*the*  
**MENA**  
*Report*

ANALYSIS & INSIGHTS  
FROM THE **ARAB WORLD**  
الشرق الأوسط وشمال أفريقيا

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 05** Welcome – Dr Fareed Sabri
- 08** Under the Shadow of the Muslim Brotherhood
- 16** Muslim Brotherhood - Historic Overview
- 29** Expansion beyond Egypt
- 35** Muslim Brotherhood in the West
- 38** Interview with Anas Altikriti
- 44** Case Study – Iraqi Islamic Party and its British Connection

**SERIES EDITORS:**

Dr Anas Altikriti  
*Chief Executive*

Dr Fareed Sabri  
*Head, MENA Programme*

Abdullah Faliq  
*Head of Research & Editor*

Hamzah D. Foreman

Amjad Mohamed-Saleem

William Barylo

**DESIGN & ART DIRECTION:**

Abdullah S. Khan  
[www.moonlight.org.uk](http://www.moonlight.org.uk)

**ABOUT THE CORDOBA FOUNDATION**

Founded in 2005, The Cordoba Foundation (TCF) is an independent Public Relations, Research and Training unit, which promotes dialogue and the culture of peaceful and positive coexistence among civilisations, ideas and people. We do this by working with decision-making circles, researchers, religious leaders, the media, and a host of other stakeholders of society for better understanding and clearer comprehension of inter-communal and inter-religious issues in Britain and beyond.

[www.thecordobafoundation.com](http://www.thecordobafoundation.com)

**COPYRIGHT**

© *The MENA Report* is a publication of The Cordoba Foundation.  
All rights reserved 2013.

**DISCLAIMER**

Views and opinions expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect those of The Cordoba Foundation.

Westgate House, Level 7, Westgate Road, Ealing, London W5 1YY  
Tel 020 8991 3372 / Fax 020 8991 3373  
[info@thecordobafoundation.com](mailto:info@thecordobafoundation.com)

# WELCOME

Two years after turbulent events in the Arab world and the dust is just beginning to settle, exposing the blurry features of new deals and alliances based on the common antagonism to an improperly defined enemy and deficient political and security strategy. In the past 20 years Western policy-makers channelled their efforts and resources to fighting terrorism without properly defining the term or addressing the root causes. Inevitably the plethora of indigenous Middle Eastern political dinosaurs, be they theocratic, tribal or military cliques, jumped on the bandwagon of “fighting terrorism” and secured front row seats despite the will and aspirations of their people. The signing of a nuclear deal in Geneva between Iran with the West on Sunday 24 November 2013 exposed the fragility of Arab national security and their ill-judged dependence on foreign protection. The deal also exposed Iran’s strength in its institutionalised theocratic democracy and its ability to use Shi’i minorities in the region to support its regional aspirations.



Despite this ostensible triumph, the people of Iran have not enjoyed the fruits of the revolution which deposed the Shah in 1979, a revolution that promised equality, justice, development and freedom. Thirty-five years of wars, austerity measures and sectarian and ideological struggles is by any standard a complete failure. On the other side, their detractors in the region are not better off despite their oil wealth and a facade of stability. The Arab and Gulf regimes in particular have not added much to the future of their people other than expensive infrastructure built on the back of the poor Asian labourers. No real achievement on science, technology, agriculture and above all, no real progress on the development of the people of the region.

Important questions need addressing. Where does the blame fall for wasting the future and lives of generations of people with the lucky ones crossing the shores of the Mediterranean on battered boats in pursuit of a better life? Is it the unconditional Western support for Arab and Middle Eastern autocracies?



Any reform without being culturally relevant to beliefs and sensitivities of the people will not have any luck in achieving the desired change.

Is it an essential feature and culture of the people of the region to divide and subdivide themselves over theocracy, ethnicity and tribal linkage, hence making their societies turbulent with inequality, injustice and consequently lacking security and real development? Is it the religious dogma that is weighing down people's aspiration to freedom and justice?

If the latter is true as some Western analysts will attest, then why are the majority of reformers in the Arab and Muslim world spring from religious ideology? And why do those who claim to believe in secular and liberal ideals the first to solicit autocratic measures to suppress any democratic aspirations?

The road to reform in the Middle East is long and arduous. Any reform without being culturally relevant to beliefs and sensitivities of the people will not have any luck in achieving the desired change. At the same time, any change without revisiting the religious text and re-examining the religious

dogma to embrace and digest the nectar of the rationality of human mind and its endeavours will also end in failure.

Iran's triumph is hollow since it only managed to delay Western interventions policy for a year or two at the most. Its real challenge is to exact internal reform especially political, social and cultural freedoms. Only free societies can achieve real development while shackled societies will linger in superstitions, poverty, insecurity and antagonism.

Despite the blip in the graph of the Arab spring and the apparent success of some Arab regimes in supporting the coup in Egypt the dice has been cast and the clock of time cannot be stopped. What was virtually impossible ten years ago is quite possible now and what is possible now will be the reality of the future. The progress of ideas cannot be stopped, even those opposing change will revert to dialectical arguments to halt it, hence inadvertently preparing the ground for the transformation. The defunct Soviet Union is our best example for the above argument.

In this edition of *The MENA Report* we study the roots and ideology of one of the main intellectual, religious and political movements in the Middle East, the Muslim Brotherhood. If any change is forthcoming, the Muslim Brotherhood will definitely be at the forefront and one of the main, if not the main harbinger of change.

**Dr Fareed Sabri**

HEAD OF THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA PROGRAMME  
THE CORDOBA FOUNDATION

---

# UNDER THE SHADOW OF THE MUSLIM **BROTHERHOOD**

---

The relationship between religious, social and political reform and violence in the Middle East has been a subject of growing interest to a broad range of disciplines for at least the past 40 years. However during these four decades most of the scientific disciplines were circumscribed by the context and controlled space of the Middle Eastern nation-state. Civil society has always been the silent and inactive component of many of the essays, observations and scientific analysis conducted by a plethora of local and foreign institutions. For example, until the dawn of the Arab Spring we did not really have a proper assessment of the ideological and political preferences of the masses.

In the absence of proper political and social analysis, we were led to believe that Arab streets would be roaring with religious slogans once the intellectual and security curfews had been lifted. Arab autocratic regimes and some Western quarters alike have been busy in the past few decades admonishing their superiors of the dangers of ideologically-based politics without paying due attention to the cultural

specificities and the difference in terminologies and references. When the masses chant “Islam is the solution” or the demands for “Shari’a Law” this does not equivocally mean that the masses have one unified outlook to politics and religious ideology.

There is no doubt that social patterns, moralities and mentalities are affected by a historical nostalgia and sanitised view of Muslim civilisation. This historical specificity does not ignore or annul the secular or the secularising forces, institutions and practices in the Middle East, as Sami Zubaida has suggested.<sup>1</sup> Neither can the predominance of secular and nationalist politics in the Middle East for the major part of the twentieth century cancel out the predominance of Islam as a religion over the past thirteen centuries in the culture, worldview and politics of the people in the region. So how do we explain the religious rhetoric, symbolism and framing of the Islamist movements despite the fact that their social and political practices are secularly based? Moreover, how do we explain the fact that for nearly

50 years secular ideas and movements have dominated both the popular and official scenes in the contemporary Middle East?

Framing and repertoires of contentions are usually constructed within the limits of cultural particularities. Islamist politics mirrors the contemporary culture of their society and borrows from their historic references but at the same time their dynamics, modes of action and political instruments depend heavily on Western-style social movements. They will continue the process of tapping into Western secular modes of action after legitimising it in their continued effort to reinterpret the religious text. This secular tendency is deeper and more rooted in the psyche of the ordinary Middle Eastern and Arab citizen though it can only manifest within the limits of the available culturally appropriate and known terminologies. Hence, Islam is the solution does not specifically mean for the ordinary citizen the application of the shari'a penal code or the waging of jihad. These slogans are loaded with contemporary social

and political context. The injustice, tyranny, the disregard for human rights, corruption and nepotism of the Middle Eastern and particularly modern Arab state, propel the masses to frame their grievances in whatever tools and culturally suitable repertoires of contention. The Arab Spring proved this premise that the Arab masses are not ideologically-driven but mobilised by the more pressing demands of justice, equality and political reforms.

Since the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the distribution of its inheritance between the super powers of the time, the Middle East witnessed a *de facto* intellectual division between three politically inspired intellectual straits. Two were the product of Western civilisations with its cultural specificities and only one can be truly considered as indigenous, though it borrowed heavily from its Western competitors. The collapse of the Ottoman Empire was not a mere military defeat. In fact, it was a defeat of the principles of the Islamic state as envisaged by the Ottoman Sultans for nearly 500 years. The struggle between the traditionalists



For the secular elites to win the argument against the traditionalists, they had to shroud their argument with heavy referencing from Sunni religious texts.

and the secular elite in the Ottoman Empire continued during much of the 19<sup>th</sup> century ending with the triumph of secular ideals with the demise of the Caliphate political system in 1924. A number of Ottoman administrations tried very hard to enact political, social, and educational reforms to catch up with the Western superpowers of the time. The Empire was crumbling under the weight of Russian expansionism and Western support for ethnic and religious minorities within the Empire.

The defeat of the Ottomans in the First World War hastened the collapse of the Caliphate in two stages. First, the religious component with all its ritual and sentimental weight was separated from the Sultanate in November 1922. Sultan Abdul Hamid II was stripped of his executive powers, delegating it instead to a republican regime. The new constitution which was ratified by the General Assembly recognised the sovereignty of the people as the only legitimate source of power and authority in the republic. However in reality, power was usurped by Kamal Ataturk and

the Turkish army for the next eight decades. The dawn of the Western-style nation state compounded with the industrial revolution and the discoveries of new continents with their huge natural and labour resources, fired up a race of national pride and achievements. The old supra-national religious state where the majority of sub-nations piggy back on a single nationality to protect and provide for the plethora of sects and ethnic groups was over. Ethnic Turks felt that they have been carrying the burden of the Islamic Caliphate project to protect the vast expanse of the Muslim land.

The evolution of secular political thought in Turkey lingered within the educated elite for nearly half a century before the abolition of the Caliphate. For the secular elites to win the argument against the traditionalists, they had to shroud their argument with heavy referencing from Sunni religious texts. They argued that real and legitimate Muslim rule based on the spirit and teaching of Islam was only realised during the life of the Prophet Muhammad and his four rightly guided caliphs (632-661).<sup>2</sup> What came after was



nothing more than dynastic rulers forcing their will on the community of the faithful. Rarely was the Islamic principle of *Shura* (consulting the people or prominent key figures within society) exercised, hence rendering the Caliphate no more than a temporal absolute monarchy deprived of its religious dimension. Hence the question why do Muslims fight to protect a political structure that was more concerned with the welfare of the ruling elite than the people it ruled? At the end of the day this Caliphate, had not been directly responsible, at least did not help in halting the degeneration of Muslims' condition.

Scholars who approach the study of Islam from the angle of *maqasid al-Shari'a* i.e. the spirit of the law rather than the letter of the law argue that the majority of Muslim jurists in the middle ages had no knowledge of other political theories that would have served their people better. Obviously, democracy, human rights, freedom of expression, the separation of powers and civil institutions were not known at the time as a proper institutionalised

and practiced political theory. Nonetheless aspects and notions of the aforementioned principles were known but scattered in books of philosophers and religious scriptures. The Caliphate structure with its rudimentary independent judiciary and often unutilised *shura* principles was probably farther advanced than other political structures at the time. Following the principles of *Maqasid al-Shari'a* which is defined as 'to achieve the worldly and afterlife interest of people, to make sure that their benefit, success, happiness and comfort is realised and to spare them harm, damage, and prevent corruption in the present or the future';<sup>3</sup> a number of scholars did not see any problem in borrowing aspects of Western political theory and structure to achieve the aforementioned interests for the nation (*umma*).

The argument above was also used by secularists to achieve the abolition of the Caliphate system. They used scholastic doctrine and religious maxims to prove their point avoiding the expected slurs of being Western pawns.

Contemporary Islamic thinkers were swayed by the argument that the Caliphate political structure was outdated and in desperate need of revision and reform. Take for example the renowned Indian poet, scholar and philosopher Muhammad Iqbal, who was influenced by Western political thought yet respected and revered at the same time by the traditionalists. Iqbal and other Muslim thinkers like Muhammad Abdu, Jamal al-Din al-Afghani and Rashid Rida examined and analysed alien contemporary political theories, appropriating components that corresponded with the principles of the Shari'a. According to Iqbal, the Ottoman Caliphate represented a symbol of power that had long been lost. He approved of its abolition sighting in many of his works the fundamental principles founded by Islam to enshrine basic ideals such as freedom, justice, equality and the absolute right of the community to appoint or dislodge their leadership based on their conduct.<sup>4</sup> Similarly, Muhammad Rashid Rida, considered as the father of modern day political Islam, held a similar opinion. Initially he supported the abolition of the Caliphate and even took

part in the National Arab Congress which he worked for and theorised through his publications such as *al-Manar*.<sup>5</sup> In 1920 Rida became president of the Syrian National Congress which affirmed Fayysal ibn Husayn's status as King of Syria but only to be deposed the same year by the French invasion of Syria in the Battle of Maysalun.<sup>6</sup>

Rida wrote a treatise in which he theorised the necessity of a Caliphate that would bind the different Muslim nations. He envisaged a proper Caliphate structure to replace the weak Ottoman Caliphate office which was rendered powerless by the secular Kamal Ataturk. A closer look at Rida's work will reveal that his ideas were ever evolving and non-dogmatic. He urged contemporary Muslim scholars to come together to revisit the religious texts and formulate laws in accordance with the spirit of the age.<sup>7</sup> At the time he even had great admiration for Mustafa Kamal; 'Great man' he remarked, but 'unfortunately knows nothing about Islam. If he had known what Islam really was, he would have been just the man who was needed.'<sup>8</sup>

“

Reform, as envisaged by Rida and Abdu, was not on the agenda of the Western powers nor the Turkish political elites.

Perhaps Rida did not realise the depth of the secularisation process that overwhelmed the Turkish elites and Western-educated intellectuals. The Caliphate was stripped of its religious dimension and rendered obsolete before it was eventually annulled. For nearly a century, Western powers worked hard to exact such deep intellectual changes among Turkish elites and society in general. Reform, as envisaged by Rida and Abdu, was not on the agenda of the Western powers nor the Turkish political elites. This must have been a shock for Rida since he was one of the proponents of decentralisation of the Ottoman Empire for which he was vehemently criticised by contemporary Muslim scholars. The distinguished Indian Muslim scholar Abul Kalam Azad, in 1912, wrote a letter to Rida in which he expressed his dismay at Rida's association with the Syrian nationalists.<sup>9</sup> Apparently, Rida was a pragmatist; he knew how prodigious the task was to reform the Caliphate, preferring to start from the individual components of the Empire working his way up -- the same way envisaged by his intellectual disciple Hasan al-Banna, the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood.

This was a third intellectual trait (promulgated by al-Afghani, Abdu, Rida and others) which was treated with suspicion by the Ottomans since it married elements from Western political theory with traditional Caliphate rule. This third trait did not manage to make inroads within contemporary Ottoman institutions, it was too little. Ever since the collapse of the Caliphate, Muslim intellectuals, mainly people of religion like Rida, theorised alternatives to the Caliphate in the shape of an Islamic state based on institutions and the separation of powers, akin to Western-style political structures.

Unfortunately, this debate about the spirit of the Islamic state, its duties and functions were supplanted by the pedantic polemics of its form, title and historicity. This unintelligible intellectual frame of mind among proponents of political Islam and their adversaries in the region prevailed for the best of the twentieth century. The demise of the Caliphate was a psychological shock to many, hence diverting the crux of the debate from an internal reform-

based agenda to an external blame and defence against colonialism, secular elites and the national state. No wonder many Islamic activists are drawn by the lure of sentimentally and historically idealised political structure when it is given a status of religious sanctity irrespective of the spirit and philosophy of the divine law or the rational and evolved theories of justice, human rights and freedom.

- 
1. Zubaida, Sami (1993). *Islam, the People and the State: Political Ideas and Movements in the Middle East*. (London: I. B. Tauris & Co. Ltd.), p. xiii.
  2. The Rightly Guided Caliphs or The Righteous Caliphs ( الخلفاء الراشدين *al-Khulafā' u r-Rāshidūn*) is a term used in Sunni Islam to refer to the first four caliphs after Prophet Muhammad. The four are Abu Bakr, Umar ibn al-Khattab, Uthman ibn Affan and Ali.
  - 3 <http://www.kantakji.com/fiqh/Files/Fatawa/w327.pdf>. (page 2)
  - 4 <http://www.allamaiqbal.com/publications/journals/review/oct01/03.htm>
  - 5 <http://www.martinkramer.org/sandbox/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/Three.pdf>, (page 28).

- 6 [http://books.google.co.uk/books?id=kQN6q16dljAC&pg=PA138&pg=PA138&dq=rashid+rida+and+the+Syrian+national+Congress,+1920&source=bl&ots=xp6TtWDufR&sig=sZ4j3HtwZGQNNof5hn24qElytll&hl=en&sa=X&ei=GO SKUp\\_0F8PQ0QXO4oHYDA&redir\\_esc=y#v=onepage&q=rashid%20rida%20and%20the%20Syrian%20national%20Congress%2C%201920&f=false](http://books.google.co.uk/books?id=kQN6q16dljAC&pg=PA138&pg=PA138&dq=rashid+rida+and+the+Syrian+national+Congress,+1920&source=bl&ots=xp6TtWDufR&sig=sZ4j3HtwZGQNNof5hn24qElytll&hl=en&sa=X&ei=GO SKUp_0F8PQ0QXO4oHYDA&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=rashid%20rida%20and%20the%20Syrian%20national%20Congress%2C%201920&f=false) (page 138)
- 7 [http://books.google.co.uk/books?id=Wto\\_ymT5vbQC&pg=PA241&pg=PA241&dq=rashid+Rida+treatise+on+Caliphate&source=bl&ots=J3syEZE4yt&sig=2ghX9W6WjKJGUJfD-zN6LMNRc0Y&hl=en&sa=X&ei=3BGKUvD0PMWthQew9YCwBw&redir\\_esc=y#v=onepage&q=rashid%20Rida%20treatise%20on%20Caliphate&f=false](http://books.google.co.uk/books?id=Wto_ymT5vbQC&pg=PA241&pg=PA241&dq=rashid+Rida+treatise+on+Caliphate&source=bl&ots=J3syEZE4yt&sig=2ghX9W6WjKJGUJfD-zN6LMNRc0Y&hl=en&sa=X&ei=3BGKUvD0PMWthQew9YCwBw&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=rashid%20Rida%20treatise%20on%20Caliphate&f=false) . (page 236)
- 8 *Ibid.*, p. 242
- 9 Willis, John (2010). *Debating the Caliphate: Islam and Nation in the Work of Rashid Rida and Abul Kalam Azad, The International History Review*, Vol. 32, No 4, December, pp.711-732.



A publication of The Cordoba Foundation that provides a medium for diverse opinions and perspectives pertaining to dialogue, contemporary issues, and cross-cultural exchange.

DOWNLOAD FOR FREE  
[thecordobafoundation.com](http://thecordobafoundation.com)

---

# MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD - HISTORIC OVERVIEW

---

Islamic history is dotted with revivalist movements and reformers aiming to reform religion and return to the fundamentals of the early message. Among those were the Kharijite<sup>1</sup> rebellions against the Umayyad and Abbasid dynasties, and Nur al-Din Zanki's movement in the twelfth century in response to the decadence and weakness of the later stages of the Abbasid dynasty. Similarly, religious scholars have played their part in the reform movement; the activities of the jurist Ibn Taymiyya (d.1328) are well documented. In principle, the revivalists have always looked for new answers to new problems, and sought to revitalising Islamic jurisprudence to answer modern-day problems and confront new realities. But they were inhibited by their inability to employ *ijtihad* (reaching a legal decision by independent interpretation of the legal sources) in matters related to the social and political life of Muslims.<sup>2</sup>

Europe expanded its power and authority over land and sea across the Middle Eastern region at the outset of the eighteenth century, dominating world trade and putting

immense strain on local economies and social structures as well as challenging local traditions and values.<sup>3</sup> In response, many revivalist movements tried to challenge the new socio-economic changes, filling the gap of authority left by the Ottomans with the withdrawal of their direct military presence from North Africa, Egypt and The Sudan. Several movements mobilised popular support for their rationale of renewing both communal and individual affairs, for example the Wahhabis (late eighteenth–early twentieth century) in present day Saudi Arabia, the Mahdis (late nineteenth century) in The Sudan and the Sanusis in North Africa (late nineteenth century and early twentieth century).<sup>4</sup> Their religio-political ideology inspired many contemporary Islamic currents through their claims to possess the cure for all the ailments of the nation; a call for a return to original Islamic beliefs and practices (the era of the 'Rightly Guided Caliphs'); the assertion of the centrality of Islam; a re-emphasis on *jihad* and the unity of the Muslim *umma*.

Islam was viewed as the major factor in developing Arab

nationalism<sup>5</sup> through the *reformist* works of Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (1838–97), Muhammad Abdu (1849–1905) and Rashid Rida (1865–1935). They emphasised the importance of developing the ailing Ottoman Empire's political and social institutions according to the European model. They did not attempt to displace the principle of Muslim identity as the basis for citizenship of the empire, but rather favoured strengthening this identity with democratic institutions, as well as scientific advancement and industrialisation. The failure of Islamic revivalists in their bid to defeat colonialism and build viable and strong political, economic, and social entities hastened the emergence of the reformist movement in the Arab and Muslim worlds.

The Ottomans embarked on a process of modernisation and reform to save their empire from decline and protect their territories from the heavily industrialised and mechanised Western armies. However, their attempts at organising and mobilising the population failed in the face of rising regional nationalism, while an inept political leadership was in

power. Moreover, corruption, nepotism, and the persistence of the notables in using the government for their own benefit rather than that of the state were all rife throughout public life.<sup>6</sup> The few reformists at the end of the nineteenth century came from colonies with well-established political administrations and organisations such as Egypt, Iran, India, the Levant, and all of them admired the European institutions that were actively helping a number of nations to achieve prosperity and military capability.

Rifa' al-Tahtawi (1801–73) was one of these pioneers. Born in Egypt, Tahtawi believed Islam to be compatible with a national state modelled on European principles of citizenship. He also believed that Western legislation that developed through rational investigation and enquiry does not contradict the spirit of shari'a law. Western-style education was his prime concern, and that of Muhammad Ali (1769–1849), the ruler of Egypt at the time. However, reformist Islam failed to materialise as a strong political current for several reasons: the Ottomans' suspicion of the



reformists' political intentions prompted them to mobilise state propaganda and urge traditional religious institutions to discredit the reformers. In addition, the reformers were seen as an elite class who were cut off from the masses, and their lack of an organised following led to a failure to promote their ideas at a time of widespread illiteracy and the limited reach of modern-day publications and media outlets.

The collapse of the Ottoman Empire in 1924 sent shockwaves across the Muslim and Arab worlds, as it had dominated their political, social and religious spheres for centuries. Moreover, there was no ready-made intellectual alternative, as Arab nationalism was still an infant theory propagated mainly by the Christian minorities in Syria and Lebanon. Surprisingly, Arab monarchs were in favour of a single Arab homeland until the late 1940s. They aspired to unite their kingdoms under one Arab Caliphate. Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Jordan competed to claim this prize, eschewed by secular Turkey.<sup>7</sup> Britain and France stood firmly against this project, for if the project materialised, the

Caliphate could lay a claim to sovereignty over all Muslims, including those under colonial rule. Colonial powers had fought the Ottomans for centuries, and hoped that the prize of secularising Turkey would be emulated all across their Arab colonies.

### *Imam Hasan al-Banna*

Imam Hasan al-Banna was born in 1906 in Mahmudiyya, a small town near Cairo. His enthusiasm for working in an organised way to promote his ideas and beliefs was evident at an early age, and he became active very young. He joined religious societies that taught instructed the youth to observe Islamic moral codes and directed people's attentions towards performing religious duties.<sup>8</sup> Al-Banna joined the Hasafiyya Sufi order at the age of 13, soon after he became the secretary of a charity organisation called the Hasafiyya Society for Charity.

At the age of 16, al-Banna entered Dar al-Ulum College in



Al-Banna believed in the importance of participating in the political process, and he therefore nominated himself several times as a candidate for the Egyptian parliament.

Cairo, later to become the University of Cairo. He graduated after four years, during which he became increasingly aware of the secular and Western influences on Egyptian society at the time. He criticised the traditional *‘ulama* (Islamic scholars, who were mainly graduates of al-Azhar University, where Islamic disciplines are taught) for their lack of action in combating these influences.

Al-Banna was influenced by the Salafiyya movement through the writings of Rashid Rida and his magazine *al-Manar* (the lighthouse). He shared his mentor’s belief of returning to an unadulterated form of Islam and to reverse the tide of secularism throughout Egyptian society. He decided to become a teacher after he graduated in 1927 with the aim of educating people of the dangers of secularisation and colonialism; also the need to unite the Muslim *umma*. Al-Banna was posted to a primary school in the cosmopolitan town of Isma’iliyya, which lies on the Suez Canal. In March 1928, along with six friends, he founded the Society of Muslim Brothers (*Jama’a al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun*).

Within a few years, membership of the Society had risen to thousands and by the early 1940s to more than 500,000. Al-Banna believed in the importance of participating in the political process, and he therefore nominated himself several times as a candidate for the Egyptian parliament, albeit unsuccessfully.

The Egyptian government felt threatened by the Ikhwan, especially after al-Banna organised a paramilitary force, *Tandhim al-Khass*, to resist Israeli occupation of Palestine in 1948. The government dissolved the organisation in December 1948, accusing it of active involvement in the assassination of government officials and political leaders. Scores of Ikhwan members were sent to jail and the organisation’s assets confiscated, culminating in the assassination of al-Banna in February 1949 at the age of 43. All of this rendered the organisation weak. However, the Ikhwan soon reorganised under the leadership of Hasan al-Hudaybi (1891–1973). The rise of al-Hudaybi, who at that stage was largely unknown to the majority of the Ikhwan,



The [Brotherhood's] strategy was to educate people and recruit enough members to be able to influence political change.

resulted in dissent internally within the movement. It is said that his membership of the Ikhwan was unknown to all but a few members of the movement.<sup>9</sup> The organisation continued to be active both overtly and covertly, depending on the political atmosphere at the time. Many of its members escaped persecution by immigrating to other Arab and Muslim countries, thereby propagating their ideas and organising sister movements in the late 1940s.

### *The Birth of the Brotherhood*

After its foundation by Hasan al-Banna in the city of Isma'iliyya, the organisation initially focused on charitable work, morals and the regeneration of Islam, but quickly grew to become a major political and social force in the Egyptian political scene in the 1940s and early 1950s. The movement's humble beginnings among workers of the Suez Canal took a major turn in 1932 when al-Banna moved his headquarters to Cairo. The move proved decisive, as the Ikhwan managed to enlist large numbers of students, peasants and urban labourers from all over Egypt. The most important change,

however, was that it put the movement into direct contact with the political centre of the country. Reform and liberating Egypt politically and economically from British intervention was at the top of its agenda. Gradually it began a process of institutionalisation, employing people to administer the growing number of recruits and establishing headquarters all over Egypt.

Indoctrinating and educating members of the movement was at the top of al-Banna's agenda, as he organised lectures every Tuesday at his headquarters in Cairo; published magazines (*al-Nadhir* and *al-Ikhwan al-Muslimeen*); and organised study-circles for all the members of the movement to recite the Qur'an properly and study Islamic sciences. The strategy was to educate people and recruit enough members to be able to influence political change. The Brotherhood believed in the need to return to the fundamentals of Islam, holding as their ideal the form of governance 29 years following the death of the Prophet Muhammad (632–61). This was an era that witnessed unity between rule and religion and in which the people had a

say in appointing the four caliphs. In return the Muslims were consulted and involved in the workings of the state, in a manifestation of a true sense of unity between the ruler and the ruled. This period of competent, qualified and just caliphs was called the *khilafa rashida* (the rightly guided rule).<sup>10</sup>

Disunity is considered to be the major ill suffered by the Muslim *umma* since the civil war between Ali, the fourth caliph, and Mu'awiya, the founder of the Umayyad dynasty. This fear and loathing of disunity prompted Hasan al-Banna to refuse to adopt a specific school of Islamic jurisprudence, and he allowed his followers the freedom to follow any *fiqh* (jurisprudence) school of thought as long as it does not contradict the principles of Islam (common principles of belief in God, the prophets, the angels and the tenets of Islam between the major Sunni schools of Islamic jurisprudence or *madhhabs* such as Hanbali, Hanafi, Shafi'i and Maliki).

For the Ikhwan, the Shari'a has been the political, moral and

religious constitution for Muslims over centuries, and the organisation considers it unimaginable for society to achieve its goal of the individual's inner harmony, political stability, and social justice without seeking the guidance of God's law.<sup>11</sup> Since the Qur'an is the true and literal word of God, and the Hadith is the word of God through the teachings of his Prophet Muhammad, then salvation and justice could only be achieved by the adherence to the two main sources of the Shari'a. A return to the principles or the spirit of Islam is imperative – but without abandoning the principles and trappings of modern civilisation, providing it does not contradict the Shari'a. The spirit of the Shari'a is paramount, and since the preservation of life, religion, kinfolk, justice and wealth are the main objectives, then any man-made system, law, idea or invention is regarded as consistent with Islam as long as it does not contradict Shari'a itself.

Egypt was occupied by the British in 1882; a year later civil courts were established and foreign judges were appointed to follow the newly adopted French laws, while shari'a law was side-lined and relegated to dealing with less significant



family law (including marriage, divorce, and maintenance and the custody of children). A modern banking system was adopted based on interest or usury, which is forbidden in Islam and the sale and consumption of alcohol was legalised.<sup>12</sup> Al-Azhar (one of the most prominent religious universities that teach Islamic sciences) was the main higher education institution in the country, with centuries of tradition. Nearly all the judges, educators, and government officials were graduates of al-Azhar, and therefore this prominent institution was seriously undermined by the new radical transformations. But Al-Azhar lacked the organisational skills and political direction to challenge the new dispensation. Al-Banna urged al-Azhar scholars to organise voice their disapproval to the Egyptian authorities, seeking change and the revival of the *umma*, using Egypt as the springboard. His efforts were unsuccessful, as it proved very difficult to change centuries of tradition of separation between *Din wa Dawla* (religion and government). Since 661 AD, Muslim scholars had been separated from the sphere of politics; their role in the process of appointing new caliphs was significantly reduced, though their consent and public

approval was sought by the ruling class for the sake of legitimacy. A peaceful coexistence between the two (ruler and scholar) was observed as long as the *'ulama* were not vocal or organised in their disapproval of the sovereign.

In turn, al-Azhar and many Islamic scholars in the Arab world saw the rise of the Ikhwan a direct challenge to their prestige and authority; but al-Banna and his organisation were restrained in their criticism of al-Azhar and the traditional *'ulama*.<sup>13</sup> The Brotherhood accused al-Azhar scholars of neglecting their duty to defend Egypt against foreign ideas and ideologies and allowing society to fall into religious, cultural, political and economic decadence.

The organisation's attitude towards the political parties and politics of the time was negative, though they did participate in the political process, seeking change from within. This attitude towards social and political participation is evident in the political direction adopted by current affiliate and similar movements in the Arab world such as Hamas in Palestine, al-Islah in Yemen, Jamaat-e-Islami in

“

Members of the Brotherhood believe that moral and Islamic religious values fused with democracy would rid society of [its] ills

Pakistan, Bangladesh, and the Iraq Islamic Party (IIP) in Iraq. Western-style democracy was seen as the best system at the time, although they felt it had its negatives such as leading to excessive individuality, social chaos and the debasement of women. Members of the Brotherhood believe that moral and Islamic religious values fused with democracy would rid society of these ills, while keeping the positive aspects of political stability.

According to their ideology, reform, political change and improving the fortunes of the *umma* was best achieved through a gradual process manifested in three stages: *first*, informing people of all social levels of the ideology of the organisation; *second*, recruiting people into the organisation, while continuing to raise their level of awareness and the need to be active in seeking change and reform; and *third*, implementing the ideals of the organisation through its political, social and religious programmes.<sup>14</sup>

Before 1944, the organisation concentrated its efforts on recruitment, education and charity work, which allowed

it to expand and prosper in relative peace, while political education and indoctrination was pursued through annual general conferences as well as magazines and newspapers (*al-Nadhir* 1938–9, *al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin* 1933–9). Politics was on the agenda, but the time was not right for the leadership of the Ikhwan to actively participate in the political process. Al-Banna followed his three-step strategy, ending the first stage (propagating the ideals and principles of the Muslim Brotherhood to the general public) in 1938, after which he initiated the second phase of recruiting, organising and reaching out to other political parties and influential people in the government of the day.<sup>15</sup> The slogan ‘Islam is *Din wa Dawla*’ became the established call of the movement, which was earlier explained by al-Banna at their fifth conference in 1938.<sup>16</sup> He stated that the provisions of Islamic law are comprehensive, and cover all aspects of this life and beyond. ‘Islam is creed and worship, state and nationality, action and spirituality, holy book and sword’,<sup>17</sup> explained al-Banna.

The Brotherhood views the separation of the state and



In 2006 the Ikhwan managed to get 88 (out of 161) of its members elected to the Egyptian parliament as independent candidates.

church not as an Islamic issue, but relevant to the specifics of Western history. It believes that Islam developed as a complete system of ethics and laws, a perfect unity in all aspects of life. Power, in the eyes of the ideologues, is vital to support the values and teachings of the religion, without which Islam loses its authority and in turn the ability to protect its teachings and values. This would lead to disunity and weakness as Islam is dispossessed of its power.

After the assassination of al-Banna in 1949, the movement reorganised and elected Hasan al-Hudaybi as its second leader. Al-Hudaybi lacked al-Banna's charisma and personal appeal, and was not well known to the grassroots. He inherited the 'secret apparatus' (a secret military wing) which had been formed by al-Banna in the late 1930s.<sup>18</sup> The Ikhwan liaised with the Free Officers (army officers who founded a secret organisation to topple King Faruq); even Jamal Abdul Naser (president of Egypt after the revolution, 1954–70) and Abdul Hakim Amir (defence minister in 1967) were members of the secret apparatus. Despite being members

of the Ikhwan,<sup>19</sup> they turned against it after assuming power in 1954.<sup>20</sup> The struggle between the Ikhwan and successive governments continued to the present day. Legally the organisation was non-existent, but it had managed to survive and continue under many guises, including charity organisations, student unions, workers' and professional unions. In 2006 the Ikhwan managed to get 88 (out of 161) of its members elected to the Egyptian parliament as independent candidates, as it put on a deliberately limited show of force for fear of reprisal and further curbs on its activities.

Physical repression of the movement continued through the late 1940s and until 1970 with the death of President Naser. The charge levelled against the Brotherhood has always been that it was attempting to use violence to achieve political ends, i.e. plotting to assume political power by revolution. Most of the accusations were untrue,<sup>21</sup> certainly when al-Banna was at the head of the movement. He refused to abandon his strategy of gradual education and

infiltration of the state's institutions for a quick, uncertain, and dangerous attempt at radical change. He always told his aides and close friends that the Ikhwan had not reached the required level of spirituality and organisation to warrant political change. He also believed in using the democratic process to achieve his Islamic goals, since the political atmosphere at the time allowed some sort of political freedom and freedom of expression.<sup>22</sup>

After al-Banna, the three people with the greatest impact on the movement's ideology and organisation were al-Hudaybi, who later became the leader of the Ikhwan; Abdul Qadir 'Auda, who was hanged with three of his comrades in 1954; and Sayyid Qutb, the movement's chief exponent and its most famous Islamic author, who was also hanged, in 1966. In the decade before Qutb's execution, thousands of Brotherhood activists were imprisoned and tortured, and Qutb was subjected to torture in the first three years of his incarceration.<sup>23</sup> Using his time in prison, he wrote his commentary on the Qur'an, *Fi Dhilal al-Qur'an* (In the Shade

of the Qur'an). He was later charged, along with two of his associates, of plotting to overthrow Naser's regime, and was subsequently hanged in August 1966, despite the pleas of many Arab political and religious leaders<sup>24</sup>.

Naser's regime put an end to free political participation, restricted freedom of expression and used trade unions as apparatus of the state. He banned all political parties, and used mass incarceration and torture against his political enemies, such as the Brotherhood and the Communists. In this austere and difficult environment Qutb developed his theory of *al-Mujtam'a al-Jahili* (the ignorant society). The term *jahili* has a special meaning in the history of Islam, as it refers to the in-fighting, immoral behaviour, tyranny and polytheism that characterised the pre-Islamic period. He argued that the Muslim world reverted to the pre-Islamic era (*jahiliyya*) because of their abandonment of the Shari'a; he also believed in the *Hakimiyya* (absolute sovereignty) of God,<sup>25</sup> and that, as all laws are derived from God – and that only through the strict adherence to Islam could a person



become free from the tyranny of fellow beings. His theory of revival is based on the idea of a vanguard of believers whose task is to change the society but who keep a distance from its ills and ignorance. The theory of being aloof from the *jahiliyya* society was interpreted by many as delegitimising the faith of society, and as justifying violence against an ignorant, non-Muslim polity.

The Brotherhood soon regained its ideological position regarding the political process and the state, returning to the principles of its founder. This was achieved by reprinting al-Banna's literature in bulk, and with literary efforts by Shaykh Yusuf al-Qaradawi (b. 1926) in his book, *Islam Between Ingratitude and Fundamentalism*; al-Hudaybi's *Preachers, not Judges*; as well as writings by Muhammad al-Ghazzali, Muhammad Amara and others. With the sudden increase in oil revenue in the 1970s and the tense political atmosphere in Egypt, Syria and Iraq, many of the political activists of the Brotherhood relocated to the rich Arabian Gulf states, taking with them their organisational skills and religious enthusiasm to found new movements similar to

the mother organisation. In Kuwait the Iraqi scholar and poet Ahmad al-Rashid reorganised the Brotherhood, uniting the immigrants with the indigenous citizens. Al-Qaradawi in Qatar, Muhammad Qutb, Muhammad al-Ghazzali, Abdul Badi' Saqr and many others propagated the same ideology and organisation in their newly adopted countries.

The Brotherhood founder al-Banna was instrumental in spreading his new doctrine of political Islam (Islam as *Din wa Dawla*) as early as 1932.<sup>26</sup> Roughly four years after the organisation was formed he established his first international branch in Djibouti. African students at al-Azhar were among his first converts, and in one of his first essays he affirmed his belief in joining all Muslims in a single political entity, which he called the Muslim Nation.<sup>27</sup> In the June (11<sup>th</sup>) 1937 edition of the weekly *Muslim Brotherhood* newspaper, it listed eleven countries in which the Brotherhood operated through formal branches, which were: The Sudan, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Palestine, Lebanon, Morocco, Bahrain, Yemen, India, Somalia and France. Many of these branches disappeared after the enthusiasm of their founders

“

Arab nationalism was inseparable from the identity of Islam before its development in its present form with the rise of Jamal Abdul Naser to power.

diminished or key members relocating in different countries. The spread of the Brotherhood in different countries were a result of personal efforts by individual members who had met al-Banna during their visits to Egypt. It also needs to be noted that these embryonic structures were directly linked to the mother organisation, with no effort to expand until the early 1940s.

But what made the idea of Islam as *Din wa Dawla* appealing, especially to the young and secularly educated? The most probable answer would involve a combination of factors that gave rise to this new phenomenon. Arab nationalism at the time was embryonic, and it did not achieve its goals either in defeating colonialism or uniting the modern Arab states after the defeat of the Ottomans in the First World War. Furthermore, Arab nationalism was inseparable from the identity of Islam before its development in its present form with the rise of Jamal Abdul Naser to power and the formation of a plethora of Arab national parties in the 1940s and 1950s. In fact, many Arab nationalists proposed the return of the *khilafa*, though under the hegemony of a single

Arab state. Events leading to Arab uprising in Palestine in 1936 and its eventual failure enhanced the commitment among all Arabs to confront the Jewish incursion on Arab land. The religious dimension to the influx of Jewish immigrants was undeniable, which enhanced the chances of the Brotherhood's religious ideology to raise support among the young and educated.

---

1. Kharijite (in Arabic: *Khawarij*) were members of the earliest sect in Islam that left the followers of Ali; cousin and son-in-law of prophet Muhammad, after the battle of Siffin (657). The Kharijite theology carried an uncompromised observance of the Qur'an and the tradition of Prophet Muhammad. They are considered the first *Takfiri* sect in Islam (a person who professes the disbelief of certain individuals or groups within the Muslim society). They refused Quraysh's (tribe of the Prophet Mohammed) domination of political leadership of the Muslim community, stressed religious knowledge, piety, and total adherence to Shari'a law as the main qualification for leading the Muslim community, anyone, even a black slave, could become a Caliph if he possesses these qualities. Their egalitarian theocracy found support among Arab tribes in southern Iraq and Berbers in North Africa. They were pacified after about 200 years. A moderate version of their school of thought and jurisprudence

survived in Oman known as the *Ibadis* and in pockets of Algeria, Libya and Zanzibar.

2. Hallaq, Wael B. (1984). 'Was the Gate of Ijtihad Closed?' *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, No. 16, pp.3-41.
3. Bill, James A. and Springborg, Robert (1994). *Politics in the Middle East*. 4th edn (New York: Harper Collins College Publishers), p.65.
4. Religious movements founded on the imperative of revising and reforming the religious beliefs which they viewed has having been degenerated over the centuries. Eventually these movements had wider political, social and religious implications on the people and the political landscape of the region after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire.
5. Esposito, John (1998). *Islam and Politics*. (Syracuse University Press); 4th Revised edition, p.60.
6. Lawrence, Bruce B. (2000). *Shattering the Myth*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press), p.41.
7. Haykal, Muhammad Hasanyn (1998). *U'rosh Wa Jiyyosh* (Thrones and Armies). (Cairo: al-Shurooq Printing Press), p.24.
8. Mitchell, Richard P. (1993). *The Society of the Muslim Brothers*. (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press), p. 2.
9. Hasan al-Banna kept al-Hudaybi's membership secret, anticipating an attempt on his life and on the life of his deputy.
10. Mitchell, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers*. p.210.
11. Al-Banna, Hasan (1938). *Islamona*. Fifth Conference (Cairo: Dar al-E'tisam), p.16.
12. Al-Wa'i, Tawfiq Yousif (2001). *Al-Fikr al-Siyasi al-Mua'sir e'nd al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin* (*Muslim Brotherhood Contemporary Political Thought*). (Al-Manar Bookshop, Kuwait), p.14.
13. Mitchell, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers*. p.212.
14. Al-Banna, *Islamona*, p.23.
15. Al-Wa'i, Tawfiq Yousif (2001). *Al-Fikr al-Siyasi...* p.34.
16. Al-Banna, *Islamona*. p.17.
17. *Ibid*. p.14
18. Al-Sabbagh, Mahmud (1989). *Haqiqat al-Tandhim al-Khas*, (*The Truth about the Secret Apparatus*). (Cairo: Dar al-E'tisam), p.57.
19. Whilst it is debatable whether President Jamal Abdul Naser's was ever a member of the Muslim Brotherhood, he and the Free Officers did try to distance themselves from the movement, but its leadership such as the late Mustafa Mashhur, Ahmad al-Malt and others insist on Naser's affiliation to the movement. They claim Naser even attended the regular *usra* (Islamic study-circles) for years before the revolution of 1952.
20. Al-Sabbagh, *Haqiqat al-Tandhim al-Khas*, p.133.
21. Mitchell, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers*. p.307.
22. Al-Banna, *Islamona*. p.41.
23. Qutb, Sayyid (2005). *Milestones* (American Trust Publications), p.ix.
24. Abdul Salam Arif, the president of Iraq interceded with Naser of Egypt to spare the life of Sayyid Qutb in 1966. He offered Qutb a safe haven in Iraq but Qutb refused the offer preferring instead to face the consequences of his religious and political theory.
25. *Ibid*. p.4.
26. Abdul-Aziz, Jumu'a Amin (2003). *Al-Ikhwan wal Mujtama' al-Masri wal Dawli fi al-Fatra min 1928-1938* (*The Muslim Brotherhood and the Egyptian and International Society between 1928 and 1938*). (Cairo: Islamic Publishing House), p.375.
27. *Ibid*. p.353.

---

## EXPANSION BEYOND EGYPT

---

The earliest recorded delegation sent outside Egypt by Hasan al-Banna was to Syria in August 1935, followed by another to Beirut in October the same year.<sup>1</sup> Both these delegations were headed by prominent members of the Brotherhood such as Abdul-Rahman al-Sa'ati, head of the organisation's Cairo branch, and Muhammad Hadi Attiya, a lawyer and a close confidant of al-Banna. In their public speeches during travels abroad, the two men placed strong emphasis on *jihad* and the struggle against colonialism. This emphasis probably helped the Brotherhood significantly gain support among the young and educated.

In general, al-Banna tried above all to reduce Islam to its essentials and put an end to the schisms between different sects and national identities in the Arab and Muslim World.<sup>2</sup> He was inspired by political and religious motives. A major part of his message was directed towards encouraging Muslims to carry out personal and individual reform. This was an attempt to unify Muslim communities in the different Muslim and Arab countries religiously as a prelude to their

eventual political unity as one Muslim Nation.

The characteristic difference between the organisation of the Muslim Brotherhood and the legacy of modernism from previous Muslim reformers like Abdu and al-Afghani, was the mode and the dynamics of the Brotherhood. Al-Banna was clear from the beginning that his movement was not just a philosophical, political or merely a social reform movement. According to Qaradawi, the Brotherhood is primarily concerned with issues related to the Arab and Muslim world. Nonetheless, the message of Islam was not limited to any specific race, social class or part of the world. In *al-Ikhwān al-Muslimoon, 70 Years in Missionary Work, Education and Jihad*, Qaradawi identifies seven objectives al-Banna laid out for the organisation, two of these were to empower Islam to return to its former glory and to propagate the message of Islam globally.<sup>3</sup>

To achieve global outreach the founders of the Brotherhood adopted a three-tier strategy. The first step of the strategy



## The Liaison Office was charged with spreading the message of Islam and the *fikr* (thought and ideology) of the Brotherhood.

was to make contacts with Arab residents and students in Egypt. One of the earliest contacts was in Cairo in 1928, with Hafidh Wahba, the adviser to King Abdul Aziz al Sa'ud. Various other foreign dignitaries were also contacted, such as Mohammed Zobara al-Hasan from Yemen.<sup>4</sup> Illustrating the emphasis on globalising the Brotherhood, al-Banna devoted an entire section in the first edition of *al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin* newspaper in 1933 about news from the Muslim *umma*.<sup>5</sup> In this edition of the newspaper, al-Banna stressed the Brotherhood viewed Islam as a person's primary identity, with all Muslims irrespective of ethnicity and background.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, the newspaper was, from the outset, distributed in many Arab countries including Tunisia, Morocco and Iraq. In its third edition of the newspaper (29 June 1933), it listed two distribution agencies based in Morocco and Tunisia. Two years later the newspaper was readily available in Libya, Djibouti, The Sudan, Iraq and the Levant.

The second part of the Brotherhood's strategy to reach global audiences it established foreign branches directly

linked to the mother organisation in Egypt.<sup>7</sup> The recruits were Egyptian-based students from different parts of the Muslim world. The idea was that these students, upon returning to their home countries, would establish branches of the movement but linked to the Egyptian Brotherhood. This was an early attempt to internationalise the movement, some fifty years before the establishment of the International *Tandhim* (Organisation) of the Muslim Brotherhood in the early 1980s. Muhammad Mahmud al-Sawwaf, founder of the Iraqi Muslim Brotherhood in 1947, studied in Egypt in the 1930s and early 1940s. In his book, *Min Sijil Dhikrayati* (*From the Records of my Memory*), in the early 1940s he established a section for liaison with the Islamic world with the help of the Egyptian Brotherhood and other Arab members of the organisation.<sup>8</sup> The Liaison Office was charged with spreading the message of Islam and the *fikr* (thought and ideology) of the Brotherhood. Based at the organisation's headquarters in Cairo, Brotherhood activists contacted Muslim scholars from different parts of the Muslim world, Arab politicians and

anti-colonial activists in Egypt. While many Arab and Muslim countries were under colonial rule in the 1930s and 1940s, Egypt was the obvious hub, since it was the largest Arab country, which enjoyed a vibrant cultural life, and boasted reputable educational institutions such as al-Azhar. The liaison office consisted of nine committees, six of which dealt with geographical regions of the Muslim world. These were North Africa; the Fertile Crescent; East and South East Africa; Saudi Arabia; Yemen and the independent kingdoms of the South and Persian Gulf; India; Ceylon; Indonesia; Malaya; the Philippines; China; Pacific and the Far East; Turkey; Iran; Iraq; Pakistan and Afghanistan. The seventh committee was tasked with issues related to Muslim minorities in America, the USSR and Europe. The eighth was an advisory committee of specialists, older and more experienced members. The ninth committee was charged with Islamic Divisions.<sup>9</sup>

The third part of the Brotherhood's strategy to internationalise relates to foreign missions as discussed

earlier. Al-Banna sent delegations to other Arab regions such as the Levant in 1935 and Iraq in late 1930s and early 1940s to open new branches of the organisation. An autonomous and activist strand of Islam was ready to be exported to the region, and no doubt al-Banna planned to repeat his success in mobilising various Egyptian social structures in other Arab countries. However, the mission proved to be more difficult – especially in Iraq, due to the diverse social, ethnic and religious make-up of the country. One of al-Banna's delegates to Iraq, a teacher named Muhammad Abdul-Hamid Ahmad returned to Egypt in 1946 after spending two years in Iraq. In a bitter speech in front of al-Banna and hundreds of Brothers he accused the Iraqi people of being morally corrupt and being more accommodating of Communism than Islam.<sup>10</sup> From this day onwards, the mission of spreading the *da'wa* in Iraq was carried out by local converts, with the official inauguration of the Iraqi branch in 1947.

From a historical point of view, it appears that many



revivalist movements or reformers began their mission and activities as a response to external military interventions. For example, the fourteenth-century scholar Ibn Taymiyya lived during the Mongol invasion, while Nur al-Din Zanki and Salah al-Din al-Ayubi were contemporary to the Crusader's invasion of the Levant. Similarly, the Sanusis' resistance in North Africa was in response to the Italian and French invasions. Similarly, Imam Mahdi in The Sudan, Muhammad Abdu, Jamal al-Din al-Afghani, Rashid Rida and Hasan al-Bana all acted in direct response to British colonialism. It is therefore a fact that foreign interventions cause major changes to a nation's political, social and economic order, sometimes resulting in a process of soul searching to find answers to the nation's decline and capitulation. In the Arab world, the political structure that had for centuries rested on two pillars, religion and politics, was disrupted with the collapse of the religious dimension (due to both external and internal reasons). Islamic reformers advocated an adaptation of Islam to the changing conditions of modern society. This required a new interpretation of the religious texts, and

changes in social, legal and economic structures. Advocates of such a change faced criticism from the traditional *'ulama*,<sup>11</sup> who accused the modernists of creating *bid'a* (unacceptable innovations, a deviation from true Islam). The two sides have continued their arguments on the issue of democracy and modernisation for the past century, but the reformers managed to kick-start the process of reinterpretation of traditional beliefs and practices. As a result many contemporary Muslim activists and organisations accept the concept of democracy, parliamentary representation, the active role of women in society and respecting human rights by the state. Islamic movements seized this opportunity provided by the weakness of the national state and its failure to provide its citizens basic needs due to the demographic changes, corruption, mismanagement and military spending.

To the Muslim Brotherhood, politics and religion are viewed as compatible spheres of activity, aspects of indivisible Islam. They also believe firmly in the international interpretation

“

Patriotism [for the Brotherhood] meant the salvation of Egypt from colonialism – and the first step towards emancipation of the other Muslim and Arab countries from Western domination.

of Islam. The leadership of the Brotherhood was very clear from the beginning that it was committed to Egypt and to the Arab and Muslim world. To them, patriotism meant the salvation of Egypt from colonialism – and the first step towards emancipation of the other Muslim and Arab countries from Western domination. Al-Banna considered nationalism as contingent on religion rather than geographical boundaries. For this ideological position the Brotherhood paid special attention to the propagation of *da'wa* to people in other Arab and Muslim countries. The leadership created the Liaison Office with the Islamic World in an effort to direct the process of political change in countries far from Egypt.

The ultimate loyalty for the Brotherhood lies firmly with the *umma*. According to the ideologues of the movement, only after the liberation of Egypt (and other Arab and Muslim countries), will it be possible to join all Muslim nations under the Caliphate (Islamic political system). To this end, al-Banna dedicated a large part of his sermons, magazines and

newspapers to Muslim causes around the world. The Liaison Office with the Islamic World, formed in early 1940s, hosted Muslim delegations and political activists from other Arab countries in an effort to create a centre for directing political change in Muslim countries. This helped propagate the ideology and organisation of the Brotherhood from an early period, and shaped the political directions of many Islamic and nationalist movements in the Middle East.

While al-Banna, like other Muslim activists, tried to improve the situation for Muslims, he was unable to entrench the intellectual structure of his movement before his demise at the age of 43, leaving his organisation to oscillate between moderates and activists with Salafi and Jihadi inclinations. With the rise of Umar al-Tilmisani (1904–86) to the leadership of the Brotherhood in the early 1970s the moderates managed to steer the movement back to the principles of its founder. They embarked on a campaign to reinterpret the work of Sayyid Qutb. Muhammad al-Ghazzali, Yusuf al-Qaradawi, Muhammad Ahmad al-Rashid, Rashid

al-Ghannouchi and many others stabilised the movement's intellectual structure with extensive writings on the subjects of faith, use of force against the state, amongst other topics.

- 
1. Al-Banna, Hasan (n/d). *Muthakarat al-Da'wa wa'l-Da'iya (Memoirs of the Mission and the Missionary)*. (Cairo: Dar al-E'tisam), pp.231-232.
  2. Al-Banna, Hasan (1947). 'Iftitah', *al-Shehab*. 14 November, p. 8.
  3. Al-Qaradawi, Yousuf (1999). *Al-Ikhwan al-Muslimoon, 70 A'man fi al-Da'wa wal-Tarbiya wal-Jihad (Muslim Brotherhood: 70 Years in Missionary Work, Education and Jihad)*. (Cairo: Wahba Bookshop), p.87.
  4. Hasan al-Banna (n/d). *Mudakarat al-Da'wa Wal Da'iya (Memoirs of The Mission and The Missionary)*. (Dar al- l'tisam Cairo), p.89.
  5. Al-Banna, Hasan (1933). 'The Islamic World', *Al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin*, 16 June, p. 21.
  6. Ibid.
  7. Abdul-Aziz, Jum'a Amin (2003). *Al-Ikhwan wal Mujtama'*... p.354.
  8. Al-Sawwaf, Muhammad Mahmoud (1987). *Min Sijil Dhikrayati (From the Records of My Memory)*. (Cairo: Dar al-E'tisam), p.105.
  9. Mitchell, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers*. p.173.
  10. Al-Sawwaf, *Min Sijil Dhikrayati*. p.101.
  - 11 Islamic scholars trained in Qur'anic studies and traditions of the Prophet Muhammad. Most of the *'ulama* are graduates of specialised universities in Islamic Sciences such as al-Azhar in Egypt.

---

## MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD IN THE WEST

---

Although there is a growing body of literature on the Muslim Brotherhood and its role in the Middle East and North Africa, little is known about its presence in the West. Of the little that is available, these writings are mostly not well-researched or carry any depth. The interest in the subject is very recent; it has been contingent on recent events focusing on less moderate Muslim organisations. Much vital information on the subject has been lost since the large number of those activists who established organisational, social and cultural work in the West and the United States were students from mainly Arab countries. Most of those activists had the intention of returning to the Middle East. From the 1950s on to the dawn of the Arab Spring archiving and documenting these activities posed a mortal threat to personal and organisational safety. But what is known, particularly in the United Kingdom, is that Arab Muslim Brotherhood students and followers of Jamaat-e-Islami from the Indian subcontinent set a base in the United Kingdom from the late 1950s and early 1960s.<sup>1</sup>

The first organised Brotherhood activism in the UK was registered when a number of Iraqi students informally set up the Muslim Student Society (MSS) in the late 1950s. Eventually, the society was formally declared in 1961 to facilitate their religious, organisational, and cultural advocacy. After this, a number of students from other Arab nationalities such as Egypt, The Sudan and Libya joined the organisation.<sup>2</sup> According to one of the founders of the MSS, Professor Salim al-Hasani explains the MSS was open to all Muslims irrespective of sect or political agenda, in the beginning. Abdul Hussien al-Jasim, an Iraqi Shi'i student edited MSS's *al-Ghruba'a* (the strangers) monthly magazine for a number of years. However, all the Shi'i students pulled out of the MSS preferring to establish their own Shi'i dominated organisations.

Amongst the early Brotherhood student activists in the UK included Islamists belonging to other groups such as the son of the founder of Hizb ut-Tahrir, Taj al-Din Taqi al-Din al-Nabhani and a number of student activists from al-Kutla



[The Brotherhood] established the Federation of Students Islamic Societies, that catered for the needs of Muslim students.

al-Islamiyya (the Islamic Block which splintered from the Muslim Brotherhood in Iraq in the second half of the 1960s) namely Ahmed al-Tutungi, Hisham al-Talib and Jamal al-Barzanchi.<sup>3</sup> This organisational openness could be attributed to a number of factors. First, the founders of the MSS were probably working on their own initiative without direct orders from their mother organisations. Second, the Arab world was polemically divided between three rivalries, the Communists, Arab nationalists and the Islamists in general. Hence the animosity was based on political ideology rather than religious divide as we are witnessing today. Finally, Shi'i students had no other political alternatives to fulfil their Islamic tendencies. In fact organised Islamic Shi'i political activism was not registered until early 1960 which started in Iraq in the shape of the Da'wa Party, a carbon copy of the Muslim Brotherhood.<sup>4</sup>

Concurrently, followers of Jamaat-e-Islami established a branch in Islington in 1962 under the banner of UK Islamic Mission (UKIM).<sup>5</sup> As mentioned earlier, Arab members of

the Muslim Brotherhood unlike their Asian counterparts were predominately students. In 1963, they established the Federation of Students Islamic Societies (FOSIS), that catered for the needs of Muslim students in further and higher education across the UK and Ireland.<sup>6</sup>

In short, the Muslim Brotherhood spread its *fikr* and influence beyond the borders of Egypt where it was founded by Imam Hasan al-Banna. The message of moderation, a complete way of life coupled with the spirit of resistance and *jihad* against foreign colonial forces was both new and an attractive message to Arabs and Muslims throughout the globe. It is for this reason the Brotherhood is today the most influential and organised Islamic movement in the world that seeks change and reform in society through legal and constitutional means. Moreover the movement's success can also be attributed to being egalitarian and organised outside the traditional tribal and cliental socio-political structures that gave it the edge over others.

PHOTO: UK ISLAMIC MISSION (1962-2012)



1. Jamaat-e-Islami in the Indian subcontinent, founded in 1941 in Lahore by the Muslim theologian and socio-political philosopher Syed Abul Ala al-Maududi.
2. Lecture by Professor Salim al-Hasani, titled 'History of the Muslim Brotherhood in the UK', Manchester 1988.
3. Interview with Professor Salim al-Hasani, Manchester, November 19th 2013.
4. Organised Sunni activism (Muslim Brotherhood) was registered in Iraq as early as 1944. In 1960, the Muslim Brotherhood founded their political wing calling it the Iraqi Islamic Party with an open policy to all sects from within the society. Shi'i clergy were alarmed at the increasing number of their fellow parishioners to have joined the IIP. To counter this supposed threat the Da'wa Islamic Party was founded in the early 1960s but their actual political activism was not registered in Iraq until the late 1960s.
5. <http://www.ukim.org/ukim/> – accessed 20 November, 2013.
6. Interview with Salim al-Hasani (2013).

---

## INTERVIEW WITH ANAS ALTIKRITI

---

To get a better picture of the influence, modes of actions and evolution of the ideology and activism of the Muslim Brotherhood in the United Kingdom, The MENA Report interviewed a prominent British political activist and academic, Dr Anas Altikriti. Altikriti was president of the Muslim Association of Britain in 2004 and was nominated a candidate in the European Parliament Elections in 2004 for the Respect Party. In 2002 he became a leading figure in the British Anti-War movement, organising many mass demonstrations against the wars in Iraq, Afghanistan and the occupation of Palestine. He co-chaired the 2-million people march against the Iraq War in London in 2003. A leading Islamic figure in Britain, Altikriti is also active internationally, promoting peace, dialogue and debating issues around security, radicalisation and justice. Thanks to his hostage negotiation and conflict management skills, he has been able to secure the release of 13 people from their abductors, including the Christian peace activist Reverend Dr Norman Kember from his Iraqi captives in 2006.

**The MENA Report:** What are the most important Muslim Brotherhood institutions that had an influence on the Muslim community in Britain?

**Anas Altikriti:** The UK Islamic Mission was among the very early arrivals to the UK representing the mainstream Jamaat-e-Islam in Pakistan. The Federation of Students Islamic Societies (FOSIS) was also an early organisation established in the early 1960s, going on to see several of its presidents and leading figures become international statesmen including Anwar Ibrahim, Mustafa Othman and many others. The Muslim Welfare House was established in 1972.

The late Kalim Siddiqui's Muslim Parliament of Great Britain was seen as the first overtly Muslim political party, influenced heavily by Iran in the aftermath of the Islamic Revolution there in 1979.

The Islamic Society of Britain (ISB) was founded in the early 1990s as the Islamic Movement's English speaking 'British cultured' arm. Before that was the Islamic Forum of Europe (IFE), although its youth wing, the Young Muslim Organisation UK (YMOUK) established in 1978, sought to work with Muslim professionals and students. This mainstream organisation had several representative satellite organisations including schools, mosques, community centres, research centres, publications who had a variance of influence on the British Muslim scene.

In the 1970s, the Da'watul Islam UK & Eire (DI) also came to be, working amongst British Bangladeshis. The Muslim Association of Britain (MAB) was announced in 1997 a few months after the establishment of the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB).



**TMENAR:** Do you believe that the Muslim Brotherhood, since its arrival in the UK at the hands of students from the Middle East in particular, had an intellectual effect on the Muslim community in Britain?

**AA:** Undoubtedly so, this school of thought was exclusive in its comprehensive approach to society, including the political. Its early call for engagement with wider Britain on every level, political participation, media interaction, training of youth, raising awareness of British Muslims' deeper dimension (the Muslim *Umma*) and its main issues, and cultivating a comparatively progressive narrative which chime with younger generations of Muslims had a deep impact on how the community became shaped.

This thought was carried initially by the waves of Muslim academics, intellectuals, experts, professionals and specialists who arrived either as students, then electing to stay or as political dissidents and refugees of mainly Arab but generally Muslim world conflicts and authoritarian regimes.

These were seen as a different type of Muslim arrivals to the mainly labour-oriented economic migrants of the previous few decades from the Indian sub-continent and Yemen.

**TMENAR:** What in your opinion is the difference between political theory of the Muslim Brotherhood and that of other Islamist organisations and Arab nationalists? Do you think that the Brotherhood managed to change some of the Muslim community's intellectual and political choices? Can you cite examples and the strategies adopted to exact these changes?

**AA:** The Muslim Brotherhood school of thought had a few advantages over other similarly inclined Islamic schools. *First*, the idea of a holistic, comprehensive approach to Islam and life was ideologically and intellectually imbedded in the basic literature taught to Brotherhood members. Hence, political effort, in its general guise was never an alien factor. *Second*, the Muslim Brotherhood school of thought is comparatively more pragmatic and versatile than the rigid

doctrines of others, allowing it therefore to capitalise on whatever conditions (political, social or ideological) it was subject to. *Third*, the Muslim Brotherhood was more apt at addressing the case for the concept of the *Umma* along with the need for a home-grown indigenous Islamic presence, in a cohesive non-contradictory fashion. While others might have appeared to advocate either an isolationist approach towards British society, or a separatist approach from the issues of the East and the Orient, the Brotherhood appeared to be successfully preaching a narrative which married both these dimensions well.

*Fourth*, the Brotherhood appeared more capable of addressing the general public as well as the various authorities in a way which did not appear to be overly alien and/or foreign. *Fifth*, the figures and personnel whom the Muslim Brotherhood produced as leaders of thought, intellect, social movement, politics as well as Islamic knowledge, were charismatic, experienced, relatively professional and carried much clout with their respective legacies.

**TMENAR:** There were some intellectual and religious obstacles as often described by some people dissuading Muslims from taking part in the British democratic process. What is, in your opinion the main goal of the Muslim community that they are trying to achieve from participating in elections, and does this participation contradict the ideology of the Brotherhood or Islam in general?

**AA:** This might have emerged as a result of an uncultivated yet-to-mature comprehensive understanding or pro-active approach to political participation. It is well documented that such participation is mainly based on short-term goals and objectives and has seen an increase when there are certain issues arise within the public domain and have an impact on the Muslim community.

Various projects have been proposed in this regard over the years, from Kalim Siddiqui's Muslim Parliament which proposed that Muslims create and join a Muslim political party which engages in Westminster but outside of the existing political system, to the more wide-spread practice

“

[The] Brotherhood through their literature, scholars and personnel have been influential in getting British Muslims to be active in the arena of civic and political engagement.

of engaging with the main political parties in an attempt to influence direction and understanding from within. However, none seem to have resolved the question of the over-arching objective (if one does actually exist) of why the Muslim community should or should not engage and become an active element of the political establishment.

While the ideological and religious impediment argument has receded over the past ten years, it still stands in many corners of the community due to the ineffectiveness of the Muslim political project and the failure of the establishment (arguably deliberate) to make such an engagement a successful or worthwhile venture. Therefore, most arguments against wide-spread effective participation usually emanate from a merely pragmatic and practical assessment, i.e. that it doesn't work.

Whilst the Brotherhood through their literature, scholars and personnel have been influential in getting British Muslims to be active in the arena of civic and political engagement, they have been less successful – in recent years - to creating a

political strategy for British Muslims. This is due to a number of reasons, including its own internal divisions over this matter resulting in its inability to produce anything of depth, clarity and practicality to the wider community.

**TMENAR:** Has there been a change in the political ideology of the Brotherhood in the past 50 years or is it the same ideology as envisaged by the founder in 1928, but his followers didn't comprehend his moderate and contemporary thought? One senses the Brotherhood ideology evolved over the past 50 years, in particular from Sayyid Qutb's uncompromising disconnection with the unjust rulers and corrupt political systems to unreserved political participation and their absolute belief in a civil state and society. How do you respond?

**AA:** The ideology remains amongst the most progressive, not only amongst Islamic movements, but amongst religious-based movements in general. However, implementation and practice remain largely stifled and yet to reach fruition due to a number of elements; external as well as internal.



## The Anti-War movement was seen as a transformation in the community's approach to political engagement, mass mobilisation and public discourse.

The need to develop the ideology from the generalities to the specifics, and from the over-arching to the detailed, remains.

Questions on the shape and nature of the state, nation and government, democracy, plurality, power-sharing, freedoms, liberties, the concept of justice, equality, the place of religion and so on according to the context, place and circumstance still exist.

**TMENAR:** In your opinion, which is the most effective Muslim institution in Britain that has had the most effective role in changing the typical intellectual and political set or frame for the Muslim community? As some have argued, the Stop the War Coalition and Muslim Association of Britain's participation have had the most effective influence on Muslims and British society in general over the past 15 years. What prompted this role and why has it diminished?

**AA:** I agree. Prior to the Anti-War mobilisation led by the Muslim Association of Britain, the most overt political

movement was considered to be the Salman Rushdie protests in 1989. However, by and large, those protests are generally regarded as a public relations disaster. However, the Anti-War movement was seen as a transformation in the community's approach to political engagement, mass mobilisation and public discourse. The fact that the community worked closely with most sectors of wider society for a number of years and achieved considerable success in doing so, is marked as one of the landmarks in the history of British Muslims and in furthering the ideological and political positioning within the British landscape.

The reasoning behind this effort was simple; the case in opposing the war was clear; the political and community alliances to be made were extremely valuable on the strategic level and the chance for British Muslims to express themselves publicly, peacefully and at the heart of Britain's most significant social and political movements in recent times, was too important to miss. Also, the fact that this came so soon after the events of 9/11, events which



threatened to cause the Muslim community to withdraw in to its shell, and give the opportunity to extreme elements to become prominent, made this an incredibly important venture.

The receding of this role came due to a number of elements, most importantly, that this movement was not part of an overall comprehensive strategy and political vision. As such, it was easy to unsettle and destabilise by uncomprehending and therefore unconvinced members of MAB and the Muslim community in general.

**TMENAR:** What was your personal role in this process and do you think that your ideas and political ideology passed through a process of change? Also what prompted this change if it ever has happened?

**AA:** I was the media spokesman for MAB at the time, and therefore heavily involved in creating the narrative that accompanied this historic movement. I claim to have gone through a mini-transformation on the level of conviction

in the benefit of such a movement, rather than on the level of conception and ideology; as I had always been a firm devotee to the necessity of such an endeavour as a strategy and not merely a knee-jerk reaction.

Working with others for a common political and social goal as well as responding to questions, doubts and attacks from my own community and organisation helped my own intellectual and political development and led to the series of questions which underpinned The Cordoba Foundation a few years later.

---

## CASE STUDY: THE IRAQI ISLAMIC PARTY AND ITS BRITISH CONNECTION

---

Contemporary perceptions of, and responses to, the ascendancy to power by various Muslim Brotherhood orientated political parties in the Middle East are still influenced by traditional Western sensitivities to an organised ideological movement with international reach. Some Western analysts follow the political prognosis of Arab regimes to warn of the monolithic ideological dogma of the Muslim Brotherhood's different organisations. The organisational and intellectual differences between the different Brotherhood organisations and their democratic and freedom of speech and association rhetoric is often down-played or even ignored. In reality, context, coupled with the willingness to reform, taking other advanced and achieving nations as a reference point, have been the main driving factors behind the evolution of the political ideology of many of the religiously based organisations, and the Brotherhood is one of them.

The Muslim Brotherhood and many religious organisations cannot be understood fully by the philosophical analysis

of their beliefs and stone-set ethical and moral values. A more accurate analysis will yield a better understanding by the study of its history and modes of action. Reciprocally, it is also important to simultaneously study the policies and ideologies of their adversaries, since throughout history reactions have always been contingent on policies adopted by the stronger party.

In what follows is an investigation of the evolution and modes of action of the Iraqi Islamic Party (IIP), an affiliate of the Iraqi Muslim Brotherhood. Their establishment of a base in the UK and their adoption of a progressive manifesto are evidence of their susceptibility to the secularising effects of modernity and Western political values.

Britain was chosen for the launch the IIP for reasons to do with the free political environment, the large Iraqi community already present in the UK, and the presence of a number of Muslim Brotherhood institutions.<sup>1</sup> At the end of January 1992 the Shura Council of the exiled Iraqi Muslim

Brotherhood convened in Manchester to discuss the launch of its political wing. The first meeting for the appointed Supervisory Committee (*al-Lajna al-Mushrifra*) was held in Leeds on the 27<sup>th</sup> of October 1992.<sup>2</sup> This first committee served as the political bureau for the embryonic party until a leadership council was properly elected from within the ranks of the exiled Iraqi Muslim Brotherhood in Britain in particular.

Naturally, the IIP's sets of ideas, goals, expectations and actions mirrored the Iraqi and international Muslim Brotherhood ideology. Close organisational cooperation with other Arab Brotherhood organisations ensured the strict adherence to the original principles laid out by Hasan al-Banna. The main purpose behind IIP ideology is to offer change in state and society making it adhere to Islamic ethics and the implementation of Shari'a law.<sup>3</sup> This goal has always been implicit through the Party's ideologues and activists. However, the dynamics and actions adopted were dictated by contexts and the peculiar make-up of the

society. Repetitive themes, discourses, signs and framing offered by the IIP serve to reproduce and project the ideals and political structure of early "pious" Muslim community. It is important to note that the duality of the Brotherhood and its political wing served two purposes.

Initially, in the 1960s the Brotherhood leadership wanted to keep the bulk of the organisation hidden from the ever-watchful eyes of the security services. Only a dedicated handful of political activists will be prosecuted in case the government decided to clamp-down on the organisation, which is exactly what happened barely a few months after the inception of the IIP.<sup>4</sup> The second was to serve the stability of the religious beliefs and dominant paradigm of the movement. In the 1990s the IIP was free to an extent to deal with new challenges which demanded a malleable political ideology. For example, the IIP carried out a series of contacts with the Iraqi Communist Party and other opposition groups. Attempts were also made to meet a number of Arab ambassadors in London.<sup>5</sup>



Nonetheless, the promotion of a true democratic agenda in the 1990s was not new to the IIP. In the 1960s after its inception, the party promoted the creation of an Islamic state through electing consultative council analogues to the parliamentary democracy.<sup>6</sup> However, it was unclear in the party's first constitution if they were ready to accept true participatory democracy with other secular trends. This vague political posture was probably due to their political experience in the 1950s and 1960s which was shaped by a destructive struggle with the Communists and Arab nationalists. The reciprocal animosity and acute ideological polarisation was not conducive for any sort of free political space.

The Muslim Brotherhood in Iraq and its offshoot the Iraqi Islamic Party never experienced governance or real participatory politics. Their dynamics and moods of action since 1959 were akin to those of covert organisations. Both the original programme of 1960 and the one promulgated in the 1990s offered only generalities. The party thus committed to such objectives as the struggle to end poverty,

fear, and the establishment of a virtuous polity. Nowhere is this generality more evident than in the first manifesto. Section seven was dedicated to the economy. Its thirteen articles were no more than bullet points or slogans with any clear definition. For example, article 42 states that the party believes in the protection of private ownership of property, while article 44 criminalises usury, monopoly, and all actions causing harm to the society. Article 48 states that the party believes in the need to develop the Iraqi economy.<sup>7</sup>

These formulas had an immense weight of religious sentiments behind them. They were written to stress the religious identity of the party in the face of strong secular government and public traditions.

The distinction between being a political party or all-encompassing Islamic trend was still in its evolutionary stage. Emphasis was placed on the moral well-being of the state and the individual. In *Dar al-Salam* (fortnightly magazine established in Britain in 1992 to represent the IIP's political views), the editor wrote about prioritising the

“

In the 1990s the leadership of the exiled Iraqi Brotherhood and the IIP were exposed to the experience of free democratic space in the West.

party's message of reshaping the moral structure of the Iraqi people, a prelude to the construction of an Islamic civilisation.<sup>8</sup>

In the 1990s the leadership of the exiled Iraqi Brotherhood and the IIP were exposed to the experience of free democratic space in the West. However, what was observable was that the new experience touched only those activists at the helm of the movement. No real effort was spent on disseminating the new political and ideological shift to the rank and file. It was virtually impossible for the leadership in exile to relay their political experience to the covert part of the organisation in Iraq. Contact between the two parts was few and far between and was carried out with the utmost precaution through non-Iraqi Muslim Brotherhood activists based in Amman, Jordan.

The IIP moved towards the discourse of purely political rule. The Caliphate was no longer considered a religious entity nor ever mentioned in the original 1960 manifesto or later ones written in the 1990s. In a multi-ethnic society

like Iraq the IIP advocated true political pluralism and equal citizenship. Power is open to all political participants based on the choice of people. In article 1 of a document titled *Political Change in Iraq* the party commits itself to the establishment of plural and constitutional rule.<sup>9</sup> This political evolution is by no means a collective theme adopted by all members and branches of the Iraqi Muslim Brotherhood.

Members of the Muslim Brotherhood in Iraq were not exposed to the experiences enjoyed by the IIP leadership in Britain. Pockets of different political ideologies within the Brotherhood movement existed in various parts of Iraq. Political repression prevented the organisation from creating an effective network of contacts and communications to disseminate their literature. From 1971, personal contact was the only form of communication between members of the organisation. These facts limited the party's scope for having a coherently spread political ideology.

To get an accurate measure of the IIP's political evolution one has to refer to the articles posted on *Dar al-Salam* a



[IIP's] political ideology had been shaped by the interrelated experiences of state repression, regional intervention... and international incursions into Iraqi affairs.

decade after the re-launch of the party in the UK. Its editor confesses to the fact that the Islamists cannot be an obstacle to political openness and political, ideological and cultural pluralism. He reasoned that the Islamists will be the first to reap the fruit of political liberalisation. Furthermore, he posited that re-Islamising the society can only happen if the society is free-willed and open to all political and ideological trends.<sup>10</sup> The editor also stressed the need to bridge the gap between different political trends and ideologies through contact and dialogue. This political wisdom became the theme of all Brotherhood organisations in the Arab world after realising that they were the first victims of political repression. The Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood was the first to enter parliamentary elections in 1984. They also declared their support for democracy that acknowledges political pluralism, the peaceful rotation of power, and the fact that the nation is the source of all power in their election programme in 1995.<sup>11</sup>

In the sanction years (1990-2003) the IIP was literalist in its

interpretation of the religious text, with minimal political tendencies towards the Iraqi regime or the foreign powers including the host country. Its political ideology had been shaped by the interrelated experiences of state repression, regional intervention with sectarian agendas, and international incursions into Iraqi affairs.

Under the title 'No to Foreign Hands, No to the Policy of seeking Foreign Assistance', the IIP criticised the Iraqi regime, accusing it of committing crimes against the people of Iraq. However, the article rejected calls by various Iraqi opposition groups to seek foreign help. The argument was based on both religious grounds and past experiences, when according to the IIP it was proven that foreign powers seek the benefit for their national interests alone.<sup>12</sup>

In closing, the above epistemological approach of the Muslim Brotherhood awards the logic behind the religious text the highest priority, since the majority of these religious verses and commands are locked in context. Justice, and the

interests of the Muslim community (*maslaha*), rather than a more literal interpretation of the text, are regarded as the backbone of the shari'a.<sup>13</sup> As a result, the various Muslim Brotherhood organisations are known to be more flexible when it comes to the management of their politics. However, what is also noticeable is the effect of the direct exposure to Western ideas and political theory. This exposure has had an undeniable effect on the leadership of the movement in the West and in the Middle East. This occurred after the relocation of a large number of Islamist activists and ideologues to the West in the 1980s and 1990s to escape political repression in their countries. This leadership had to engage in practical terms with the notions of democracy, pluralism, elections and citizenship.

2. Minutes from the first meeting of the Supervisory Committee which functioned as *Maktab al-Siyasi* for the IIP: Five people were chosen to serve on the first committee; they were Osama Altikriti, Basim al-A'zami, Mohammed Abdul Karim Altikriti, Jasim al-Duri and Qaduri Dakhil. All had postgraduate degrees from British educational institutions.
3. Al-Samara'i, Ayad (1997). Editor's column. *Dar al-Salam*, May, p.4.
4. Al-Mashayki, Kathum (2005). *Genesis of the Iraqi Islamic Party*. first edition (*Tarikh Nash'at al-Hizb al-Islami al-Iraqi*), (al-Raqim Library, Baghdad), p.209
5. Document from the archives of the IIP titled, 'Activities of the Iraqi Islamic Party'. The document is undated but was most probably written in 1999.
6. Al-Mashayki, Kathum (2005). *Genesis of the Iraqi Islamic...* p.34
7. Ibid, p.40.
8. Al-Samara'i, Ayad (1998). Editor's column. *Dar al-Salam*, October, p.5.
9. Document from the archives of the IIP titled, 'Political Change in Iraq', 8 February 1999.
10. Al-Samara'i, Ayad (2000). Editor's column. *Dar al-Salam*, September, p.4.
11. Al-Wa'i, Tawfiq Yousif (2001). *Al-Fikr al-Siyasi...* p.56
12. Front Page, *Dar al-Salam*, 10 February, 1995
13. The notion of *maslaha* is reiterated many times by Shaykh Yusuf al-Qaradawi in his weekly programme *al-Shari'a wa'l-Hayat* on al-Jazeera satellite television.

---

1. Internal document from the archives of the exiled *tandhim*. It was distributed to those of the rank of *naqib*, 2 February 1992. The *tandhim* (organisation) is based structurally on cells or groups of study circles of between 5 to 10 people. Each study circle or *usra* (family) is normally facilitated by a *naqib* (leader).

# THE CORDOBA FOUNDATION CREDIT CARD

4GB USB FLASH DRIVE

*LIMITED EDITION*

*Loaded with publications from The Cordoba Foundation*



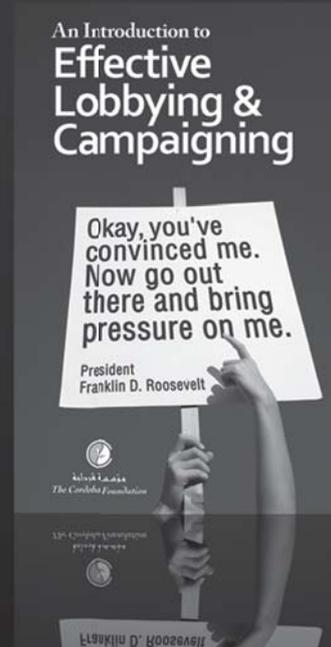
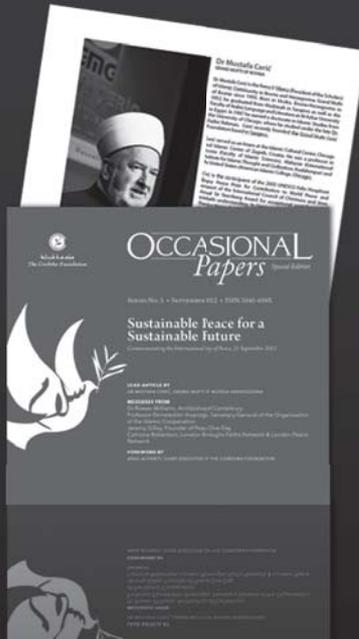
CAPACITY: 4GB  
HIGH SPEED DATA TRANSMISSION  
PLUG AND PLAY WITH USB 2.0 INTERFACE  
SPECIALLY DESIGNED WITH CREDIT CARD SHAPE

WEIGHT: 8.56G  
SIZE: 8.3 X 5.2 X 0.1CM

**£9.99**

**ORDER YOURS NOW**

[THECORDOBAFOUNDATION.COM](http://THECORDOBAFOUNDATION.COM)



ORDER YOUR COPY TODAY!  
[thecordobafoundation.com](http://thecordobafoundation.com)  
[info@thecordobafoundation.com](mailto:info@thecordobafoundation.com)



مؤسسة قرطبة  
*The Cordoba Foundation*  
 Cultures in Dialogue.



مؤسسة قرطبة

*The Cordoba Foundation*

---

Level 7, Westgate House  
Westgate Road, Ealing  
London W5 1YY  
United Kingdom

---

Telephone +44 (0) 20 8991 3370

Telephone +44 (0) 20 8991 3372

Facsimile +44 (0) 20 8991 3373

---

[info@thecordobafoundation.com](mailto:info@thecordobafoundation.com)

[www.thecordobafoundation.com](http://www.thecordobafoundation.com)

---

*Cultures in Dialogue.*

---



Twitter @CordobaFoundati(The Cordoba Foundation)