

The Muslim Brothers in Europe: Deciphering the Network's Goals

By Rory Devine

Abstract:

Contemporary research on the Muslim Brotherhood in the West is generally understood among sharp rifts that obscure the nature of the group's Islamist character. On one hand are "Islam-bashers," who misleadingly conflate Islamist with Islamic ideology and propagate alarmist analyses of all Islamic-motivated groups. On the other lies "Islam-apologists," who also blur the lines between Islamist and Islamic organizations, naively refusing to address the alarming history and statements put forth by the Muslim Brotherhood. This side dangerously argues the Brotherhood's inclusion in politics will put the group on the path towards eventual moderation. The following analysis seeks an objective alternative by examining primary sources to understand the Muslim Brotherhood's true intents in Europe. It argues against any understanding that the Muslim Brotherhood is on a path towards increasing moderation, and instead underlines the need for continuing state surveillance of the organization's affiliates.

Introduction

In recent years, European governments are finally beginning to wake up to the true intentions of the Muslim Brotherhood which undoubtedly pose a serious threat to the political and social landscape in the West. Founded in Egypt in 1928, the Muslim Brotherhood is a revolutionary fundamentalist ideological movement that seeks to bring about a global Islamic reformation through its loosely-affiliated networks, which conveniently grant members plausible deniability. In the past, many European governments have unfortunately turned a deaf ear to the long-term goals of the Brotherhood, while focusing solely on the organization's pragmatic messages that make its affiliates appear as moderate. Yet the fundamentalist character of the Muslim Brotherhood, as an upholder of core Islamic values, is antithetical to moderate, or hollowed out, religious discourses. This dangerous misconception neglects the historical and ideological underpinnings of the organization in which its long-term interests remain largely unaltered. The goal of the Muslim Brotherhood in Europe, however utopian, remains not only to inculcate Muslim masses in fundamentalist literature, but also to Islamize the rest of the globe under the banner of so-called universal Islamic values.

As this paper will show, Brotherhood affiliates in Europe believe they are uniquely positioned in the West to use its global influence throughout the world to bring about a majority Islamic society. This analysis focuses on the lengths to which the Muslim Brotherhood has toned

down the radical undertones of its pronouncements towards working within the European legal framework. It argues that the Muslim Brotherhood remains a serious threat to European legal systems and, therefore, government authorities should continue to study the organization in both the public domain and behind closed doors.

Lastly, it is worth mentioning that, in no way, is this analysis an effort to disparage Islam and truly moderate Muslims who genuinely use their religion to better themselves in their society. Rather, this paper seeks to explain the threat posed by the European Brotherhood to not only Western political and social systems, but also to Islamic communities that, unaware of the true nature of the Brotherhood, join affiliated organizations and become steeped in its extremist discourse. Although some may view the following as “Islam-bashing,” the paper is based primarily on documentary source material from Brotherhood organizations and affiliates, to display the true implications of its ambiguous pronouncements. Interestingly, the recent reversal in the stances of several European governments towards Brotherhood organizations is a revealing indicator that supports the underlying thesis of this paper.

The “Universality of Islam”

In November 1979, a delegation of Muslim Brotherhood members met in Lugano, Switzerland to map out a new strategy for the organization’s operations in Europe. The group confronted an emerging era where past Islamic interpretations of a binary conflict between *dar al-harb* (the abode of war) and *dar al-islam* (abode of Islam) were losing relevance with the increase of immigration from Muslim countries to the West. Since *sharia* was not yet established, Europe could be viewed as *dar al-Islam* and, therefore, assumed a new status: *dar al-dawa* (abode of the propagation of Islam).ⁱ This aligned with the founder Hassan al-Banna's understanding that the world was on the brink of an “expected awakening” in which Muslims in Egypt were to seize control of the state and lead a global movement to rid the world from the excesses rooted in secular, capitalist democracies in exchange for a new infallible system based on all-encompassing Islamic principles.ⁱⁱ However, rather than taking place in Egypt, the West would become the new focal point to carry out global Islamic reform. This effort would be driven through a bottom-up approach in which the Brotherhood would rise to the status of in the Western elite via educational initiatives. Once firmly embedded in key national institutions, the

Muslim Brotherhood would lead a top-down strategy to uproot constitutional foundations in European societies and establish Islamic principles.

At the heart of the Brotherhood's impetus for an Islamic governed society is the group's strong adherence to its belief in *alamiyyat al-islam* (the universality of Islamic principles). This concept is rooted in the Islamic concept of *tawhid* (oneness in Allah) and as well as the notion that Allah sent his believers out of mercy for all mankind—a belief present in fundamentalist interpretations of all missionary monotheist religions. Indeed, the Muslim Brotherhood believes the *fitna* period after the death of the Prophet led to infighting between Muslims masses that culminated in the morally corrupt empire of the Umayyad dynasty. As stated in a speech titled “Uniting Hearts Around a More Noble Goal,” Hassan al-Banna notes: “the first Muslims were strong only in this global call that united their hearts and thoughts around one goal,” and that it was “partyism” that led to a weakening of Muslim masses. In short, al-Banna argues, the “party spirit is the scourge that annihilates Muslim unity” and thus cripples the ability of Muslims to institutionalize of Islam throughout the world.ⁱⁱⁱ

It was the disunity of Muslims that made the Arab world susceptible to colonial conquest by the Imperial West during the Ottoman empire. This concept has been remodeled to fit the current age. The Brotherhood claims that *fitna* between Islamic groups in Europe—which is attributed to the absence of a formal hierarchical structure in Islam—has divided Muslims into an alienated and weak social status. Furthermore, Brotherhood affiliates often promote the conspiracy that Western governments have promoted this isolationist trend by bankrolling Arab petromonarchies, promoting the a quietist Salafi strain of Islam throughout the world.^{iv} Indeed, this perceived intellectual colonization is a trait that the Muslim Brotherhood believes has continued to drive Muslim masses to the periphery of Western society.

A common theme expressed by prominent Brotherhood thinkers in Europe is the view that the Western society is essentially a zero-sum struggle between ideological forces in which secular democracy is currently in complete control. In the European Council for Fatwa and Research (ECFR) report “Politics and Religion in the Modern West,” Dr. Abd Abdel Salam provides a history of the struggle between Christianity and “atheism” produced during the Enlightenment in the West. Salam begins with a history of how, before the Enlightenment, the Catholic church was able to reign over the political and social realms of European society strictly due to its centralized hierarchical foundation that promoted strong unity among all Christians.

The Protestant Revolution, however, led to great decentralization (*fitna*) which drove corruption in European society. According to Salam, the disunity of Christians led to the moral degradation produced by Enlightenment thinkers that, after the French and Bolshevik Revolutions, served as a vehicle for secularizing the state. Thus instead of being ruled by infallible religious understandings, European society had become dominated by imperfect human conceptions of governing. Salam also posits that this secularist revolution ultimately desiccated the Christian identity of European citizens, pushing Christians towards more moderate religious discourses.^v

This lesson underlines the understanding of *fitna* as a major threat to the Brotherhood's legitimacy in Europe, causing the group to form a vast network of political and grassroots organizations to preserve its fundamentalist character. In addition, European Brotherhood members often disparage what they believe as the barbarity produced by Enlightenment literature, which led to both the subjugation of Muslim masses during the colonial period as well as the carnage of the two World Wars.^{vi} While the struggle on the perceived arch towards global Islamic reform may prove difficult in the short-term, the Muslim Brotherhood wholeheartedly believes that this revolution is inexorable, as pre-determined by the Almighty. As for secular ideologies, these belief systems will wither out just as with the mortals who produced them. As Tariq Ramadan routinely posits, "the Soviet Union is dead, but Islam is still alive."^{vii}

To bring about a global Islamic reformation, it is time for Muslims to educate themselves about the *thulm* (injustice) they face from their so-called intellectual colonizers, and reject all isolationist stances by working within the Western legal framework. This will come through direct and indirect means, which can be understood respectively as political and grass-roots initiatives.^{viii} As Tariq Ramadan notes in a 2016 article, "General Objectives," the first objective of the Muslim Brotherhood should be to trigger a bottom-up movement by proselytizing "a serious understanding of the Islamic universe of reference, with priority given to teaching *ulama* [Muslim scholars], intellectuals, and leaders of organizations."^{ix}

Perhaps, one of the most revealing sources on the Muslim Brotherhood's strategy in the West is Tariq Ramadan's six-part series "In the West: First Attempts at Reform," where he views Muslims as "settled at the center" of the West, which maintains an ideological hold over much of the world. Ramadan argues that the strong influential power that the West offers presents an enormous opportunity for the Brotherhood to carry out an approach "from the inside" to Islamize not only Europe but also the entire world. Thus, the "*dar*" (abode) concept is a flawed human

reinterpretation of fundamental Islamic sources, or *ijtihad*, because it does not fully articulate the universality of Islamic values. “Rather than the ‘house’ notion,” Ramadan argues, “we [the Muslim Brotherhood] must see the whole world as our dwelling.”^x In contrast to the initial concept of a conflict between *dar al-harb* and *dar al-islam*, the European Brotherhood network views the “clash” occurring solely within the West through its legal framework.^{xi} Ramadan also notes that while *dawa* (propagation of Islam) had been the initial strategy of the early Muslims, when the Sassanids refused, the resulting war carried out by the Muslims was against the “rulers and not the people.”^{xii}

A common rhetorical ploy used by the Brotherhood when talking about *dawa* is that it represents a matter of “transforming, rather than converting.”^{xiii} Other concepts such as “integration” and “pluralism” are met with equally nebulous responses. An example is the 22nd principle of the 2008 Muslim Charter in Europe that claims the Brotherhood “affirms respect for pluralism... but rather calls for the acquaintance, cooperation, and integration among the members of one society.”^{xiv} Therefore, rather than Muslims integrating into Western society, Europeans should integrate under a new society governed by Islamic law, or *sharia*—which will be explored later in this piece.

The Direct Approach

A central pillar of the Muslim Brotherhood’s strategy in Europe is to remain flexible in its gradual approach to Islamize the state. Brotherhood members call for the need for Muslims to come to grips with the *asl* (state of affairs) and accept Western political practices in its strategy to Islamize the state. As Rashid Ghannochi affirmed, “we must recognize that there is a civilized infidel and a backward Muslim.”^{xv} Although politics is perceived as an inherently corrupt practice because it is based on the imperfections of human law in contrast to *hakimiyya* (sovereignty of Allah), Brotherhood-affiliated organizations have established an extensive list of lobbying organizations to advance pro-Brotherhood policies in Europe and build the political acumen of its members. Additionally, the network has often sought alliances with both Muslim and non-Muslim organizations in order to achieve their principal objective as representatives of the majority of European Muslims.

For the Muslim Brotherhood, the notion of citizenship combines both “rights” and “duties” in which Muslims must be involved in politics to protect the integrity of Islam in their respective countries.^{xvi} Currently, Brotherhood affiliates are launching public outreach campaigns to encourage members’ participation in elections, while often justifying such action under the rulings of the Brotherhood's spiritual guide Yusuf Qaradawi that “voting is a deeply-rooted Islamic system,” embedded in the Islamic practice of *shura* (consultation).^{xvii} Voting becomes *fard kifaya* (a general obligation) for all Muslims when a candidate, whether Muslim or non-Muslim, furthers the *masalah* (interests) of European Muslims.^{xviii} In a *fatwa* (religious edict) on voting, the ECFR grants Western Muslims the right to participate in elections on the grounds that it preserves their Islamic identity and such interests “cannot be achieved without such participation.”^{xix} Further, the ECFR grants the right for the inclusion of women as political representatives “at times,” as long as such participation does not interfere with their primary duties in tending to family matters.^{xx}

National organizations such as the Muslim Association of Britain (MAB) and the Union of Islamic Organisations of France (UOIF) are situated near key political hubs to conduct government outreach. These groups are tasked with modifying fatwas delivered by the ECFR, to fit within their respective environments. According to the Brotherhood, *fatwa* is needed to settle situations where a state law would act against the “conscience” of fundamentalist interpretations of Islam.^{xxi} It thus trumps state law in these cases, which members justify as embedded in the right in many European countries of the freedom of belief.

The Brotherhood network also includes a long list of transnational lobbying groups, such as the Federation of Islamic Organizations in Europe (FIOE) and the Forum of European Muslim Youth (FEMYO), which are stationed near Brussels for outreach with the European Union. Additionally, the Brotherhood maintains a complex web of think-tanks and policy research organizations—to name a few: the Cordoba Foundation, Center for Islamic Legislation and Ethics, and the European Muslim Network—which lobby both for pro-Brotherhood policies with legislative institutions, albeit these institutions have largely failed to gain significant influence over public policy to date.

Yet, there are some cases worth mentioning in which Brotherhood organizations have gained influence through pragmatic maneuvering. In the aftermath of the 11 September 2001 attacks, the Muslim Association of Britain formed the Stop the War Coalition (StWC), an anti-

war coalition formed with the Trotskyite organization, the Socialist Workers' party. The move launched the MAB into fame among the British Muslim masses when the StWC scheduled a February 2003 anti-Iraq war protest, attracting 750,000 people. However, the MAB's fame came to an abrupt end shortly after the 7/7 bombings in London. Further, the decision by Labour Mayor of London Ken Livingstone to hold a 2004 City Hall gathering in protest to France's ban on the veil caused public outrage after it gave a platform to the radical head of the ECFR Yusuf al-Qaradawi.^{xxii} Indeed, a lot of literature already exists on Qaradawi's pronouncements—ranging from condoning Hamas's use of suicide bombing to the Nick Berg beheading—which this paper will not further address. Later, Livingstone, whose protest was viewed as a way to gain the Muslim vote before an upcoming election, apologized to his constituents by claiming he “knew nothing about the (sic) sheikh Qaradawi before the event.”^{xxiii} Subsequently, during his time in office Livingstone sponsored a government grant of £200,000 to the MAB-organized “Islamic Expo” in London, which gave voice to other Islamist preachers.^{xxiv}

Unfortunately, Western European administrations have also allowed Muslim Brotherhood preachers to participate in government-led anti-radicalization initiatives. An example of this is when the Metropolitan Police Service in Britain replaced a radical Finsbury Mosque imam with the Brotherhood-affiliated preacher, Abu Hamza al-Masri.^{xxv} Recently, a 2014 report by UK's then-ambassador to Saudi Arabia, John Jenkins, served to lobby the Cameron administration to consider whether the Muslim Brotherhood may offer a “firewall” against violent extremism.^{xxvi} In France, the UOIF has at various times been allowed to participate in previous government-led dialogues topics such as how the government can effectively engage French Muslims.^{xxvii} Perhaps, Germany offers the best model towards confronting the Muslim Brotherhood as the *Verfassungsschutz* closely monitors its Brotherhood affiliated organizations, such as the Islamic Community in Germany (IGD) and the Central Council of Muslims in Germany (ZMD), as part of the country's policy of *wehrhafte demokratie* (well-fortified democracy) - which is rooted in the government's suspicion of all extremist groups in the aftermath of the Nazi era.^{xxviii}

The Brotherhood political organizations in Europe have long contested the very term “radicalization” as a pejorative term that adheres to what they label as the “discredited” conveyor belt theory, where radical discourses influence members to join violent jihadist groups such as al-Qaida affiliates or the Islamic State. Indeed, this understanding neglects the fact that

Brotherhood ideologues - such as the brother of Sayyid Qutb who taught Usama bin Laden in college—have influenced various key members of jihadist groups. Further, Brotherhood members claim that "subjective" terms such as "extremist" and "Islamist" are part of the government's "securitization of Islam" or the viewing of Islam, solely through a threat lens, which has reinforced "Islamophobia" in the west. In a policy paper published by the Cordoba Foundation, Virginia Wesleyan University professor Dr. Alain Gabon argues that Islamic terrorism in Europe is an exaggerated threat "equivalent to the red scare," thus discrediting the genuine threat of communism during the cold war. Gabon ends by arguing that the real threat to stability in Europe is pervasive "Islamophobia" and rise of the extremist right.^{xxix} These assertions align with the key characteristic of all extremist groups throughout history who, in their propaganda, speciously claim that they are the victims of oppression.

For Tariq Ramadan, the government's use of the "extremist" label highlights the "double standards" of the West's claim supporting pluralism, asserting that the ulama in the West serve as "government agents."^{xxx} Selma Yacoob - a leader in the Muslim Brotherhood affiliated coalition, the Respect Party - argues that she finds it "absolutely disgusting" that the British government labels her as an "extremist" since, she believes, her government carries out "violent extremism all over the world, from Afghanistan to Iraq, to Libya."^{xxxi} Furthermore, the radical UOIF imam, Hassan Iquioussen, claims that the term "terrorist" is a subjective term arguing that "Jean Moulin was a terrorist for the Germans, and he was a hero for the French."^{xxxii} Thus, one does not need to look further to recognize the veracity of the conveyor belt theory as it applies to Brotherhood members who adhere to the same ideology as their more violent counterparts, such as al-Qaida affiliated groups, but disagree only on which strategy is best towards achieving their goals: Whether from a non-violent, bottom-up approach to work within the state's legal framework (as in the case of the Brotherhood), or from a violent, top-down approach (al-Qaida's approach). Indeed, in the aftermath of the failures of Muslim Brotherhood's governance attempts post-Arab spring, many members have largely dismissed politics all together and have joined violent jihadist groups.

The Indirect Approach

The survival of the Muslim Brotherhood throughout the decades can be attributed to its focus on fully embedding affiliates on the grassroots level. As a school teacher, Hassan al-Banna promoted for a small guardian directive to lead educational initiatives in schools that aim to indoctrinate new generations of Muslims in fundamentalist Islamic values. In a policy book published on the ECFR website, Hussam Shakir posits that the Brotherhood should model its approach on Western liberal parties that successfully infiltrated European academic intuitions by the end of the 1970s, enabling them to gain political prominence. In short, Shakir observes that the path to Islamization must come via the “influence of elite intellectuals, then to society, then to politicians to follow them.”^{xxxiii} Tariq Ramadan also advocates for a “radical reassessment of what we are teaching our children,” while stressing the need for the emergence of a fundamentalist "Islamic university-style program" in the West.^{xxxiv}

The Brotherhood has formed various national and transnational youth organizations throughout Europe to foster the next generation of Brotherhood leaders. At the Muslim Association of Britain 2017 annual conference, the leader of the Muslim Youth (UK) Obada Sawalha explicitly stated that his organization is “trying to work from the bottom-up” to boost youth proficiency in political outreach and strategic communications in the media domain. According to Sawalha, the organization has two functions: To develop the skills necessary to produce the next generation of Islamist activists in Europe, and to maintain strong ideological adherence through “*tarbiyyah* (spiritual renewal) membership teams.”^{xxxv} The MAB also runs a website, “Best of British Muslims,” which lists a number of intellectuals, *nasheeds* (Islamic vocalists), and Islamist comedians oriented to the youth.

At a 2011 Federation of Student Islamic Societies (FOSIS) Winter conference, a MAB-affiliated member, Abduh Rahman Musa, provided more insight into the Brotherhood’s indoctrination efforts directed towards youth. Musa quoted Sayyid Qutb’s notion of *tarbiyyah*, stating that the mind is a collection of thousands of programmed human thoughts that serve as “obstructions” and corrupt the way one behaves. Thus, Musa explained, one should detach himself from his thoughts, or *shawa* (desires), and give up his mind to the Almighty. “Who here wants to do something they can’t understand?,” Musa addressed a puzzled conference audience. “I know why (a lack of response)... it’s because of your thoughts,” Musa continued, “Your mind wants to exist and it feels like it’s dying when you say the *shahada* [Islamic creed]... your mind is your master, and you are the slave.” Instead, Musa argued, one’s mind should be replaced by

the word of Allah held in the Quran. Musa concluded by claiming that *taqiyyah* (fear of persecution granting the permission to lie) is a religious right permitted to Muslims in the West, stating: “You have to lie because you can’t make the environment the way where you wouldn’t have to lie.”^{xxxvi}

The Brotherhood has also created a web of grassroots affiliates throughout Europe that are tasked with safeguarding Islam’s integrity. This desire to protect Muslims from perceived corruption in the West is predicated on their fundamentalist value of *al-amr bi-l-ma’ruf wa an-nahy ‘an al-munkar* (commanding good and prohibiting evil) as expressed in the Quran and Sunna. These social institutions primarily seek to educate imams through religious retreats and seminars for them to in turn educate their congregations. These groups seek to promote unity and forbid the action of *takfir* (excommunication) and *al-wala’ wa-l-bara’* (loyalty and disavowal) as actions that produces *fitna*. As Tariq Ramadan argued at a 2015 Muslim Association of Britain conference: “I don’t hate safafis... I deeply respect the salafi point of view, because they respect the texts.”^{xxxvii}

Another key initiative is the so-called protection of women on social issues such as the veil issue, especially in the context of the French secular system of *laïcité*. The European Council for Fatwa and Research has called France’s 2004 ban on the veil as “an attack on religious property” since it is a “duty not a religious symbol.”^{xxxviii} On its website, the Islamic Centre in Munich declares that the ban runs in direct conflict to core Islamic values upheld in the Quran and Sunna enforce "dress codes" on both men and women.^{xxxix} Unsurprisingly, Muslim men have dubiously spearheaded the necessity of the veil. As Mohamed Laabdallaoui of the ZMD states, “we men cannot be happy when our sisters our unhappy.”^{xl} On the other hand, Brotherhood female representatives, such as Ameenah Blake and Zahra Ali, suggest the veil represents “freedom” from forced secularism as it serves as a potent symbol of resistance against intellectual colonization.^{xli} Moreover, Brotherhood affiliates often contest the mixing of genders in society, albeit this is changing due to demands of women in the workforce. A 2017 fatwa released by the ECFR now grants the interaction between genders as long as such interaction “cannot be prevented” and occurs within a “sharia-compliant activity.”^{xlii}

Sharia and Jihad

Tariq Ramadan posits that the first principle of Muslims in the West should be to “struggle and promote justice.”^{xliii} This can be interpreted respectively as waging *jihad* (effort, or striving, but historically as it applies in war) and promoting *sharia* (law based on human deliberation of core Islamic sources). Indeed, the all-encompassing nature of *sharia* is expressed in Hassan al-Banna’s “50 requests” as a comprehensive initiative that includes, “reform of the law, so that it will conform to Islamic legislation in every branch.”^{xliiv} While European Muslim Brotherhood scholars view *sharia* as a set of divine laws to free humans from their selfish inner-desires, members often disagree on whether the Islamic sources that underpin *sharia* should extend from the fundamental sources, the Quran and Sunna, to include *ijma* (consensus) and *qiyas* (analogy). Nevertheless, all agree that the *sharia* is predicated on the careful deliberation of *ijtihad* (reinterpretation) to that shape fatwas which consist of fundamental precepts and *masalah* (contemporary public interests).

The implementation of *sharia* in Europe, according to Tariq Ramadan, should consist of a two-pronged approach in which Muslims will first differentiate between existing laws within secular society that conform to Islamic principles from the ones that are antithetical to the Quran and Sunna. Next, Muslims will “engage in a systematic work of selection” to uphold compatible judicial laws while eliminating the laws that transgress Islamic doctrine.^{xlv}

Central to the to the European Brotherhood’s belief in *sharia* is the need for *tajdeed* (spirit of renewal in interpretation) in order to chart the new parameters of Muslim involvement in Europe. Although some pundits in the West wrongly view this as a point on the Brotherhood’s path towards eventual “moderation”—often drawing comparisons of Brotherhood to the Christian Democrats in Europe^{xlvi}—this, however, fails to consider that *sharia* consists of both *al-kulliyat* (fundamental principles) expressed in the Quran and Sunna, and *al-juz’iyyat* (legal rulings based on public interests that are not explicitly stated in core Islamic sources).^{xlvii} While *al-juz’iyyat* may be subject to reinterpretation to align with “the environment” (contemporary society), it is strictly forbidden to make any changes to *al-kulliyat* - which leads to problematic religious edicts.

A key example, is the European Council for Fatwa and Research’s *fatwa* titled the “Penalty of Apostasy” which reads: “the issue of killing the apostate is up to the state and its return to the Islamic government and not Islamic institutions or associations... and kill him [the apostate] in order to protect religion and society from corruption,” which leads to “public

harm.”^{xlviii} Therefore, while the Brotherhood opposes any direct violation of state law that could result in the government’s crackdown against its affiliates, it still cannot reconcile the need to uphold *al-kulliyat*. It is worth mentioning that members argue that the degree to which the punishment is inflicted may be subject to change—with some arguing against corporal punishment^{xlix}—they still acknowledge that the Quran and Sunna demand retribution for certain violations. Further, the fatwa’s reference to the “return to the Islamic government,” fully underlines the alarming nature of the Brotherhood’s core intents in Europe.

The Muslim Brotherhood goes through great strains to be careful in its public statements on *jihad* while acknowledging that these terms conjure unsavory images in the West. According to the 2008 Muslim Charter of Europe, *jihad* means “exerting efforts in the path of good from self-reform to the promotion of justice and justice among human beings.” While the Charter states that it rejects violence, the delegation contradicts this by recognizing “the right of all people to defend their rights in legitimate ways away from bias and injustice.”^l For Tariq Ramadan *jihad* is a two-stage process consisting of resistance from unbelief, and reform of the society. Ramadan argues that the terms “lesser” and “greater” *jihad* are irrelevant as, he believes, *jihad* “depends on the environment,” stating that Muhammad’s first *jihad* came in the form of “intellectual” when he was told *iqra*’ (to recite) the word of Allah.^{li} The Central Council of Germany thinker, Muhammad Laabdellaoui believes that *jihad* is the word of the righteousness (*kalimatu adl*) before the tyrannical ruler” to prevent injustice. This injustice, Laabdellaoui argues, must be “fought at the root... winning the hearts and minds through sublime gestures or forgiveness, or undone or alleviated by reparation, or finally... by punishment or retribution.”^{lii}

Many Brotherhood scholars often quote the Sayyid Qutb’s statement on the so-called “lesser” *jihad* (religiously-sanctioned use of force) as justified only when it is fought “defensively” against the “political and intellectual domination” of the West and its partner, Israel.^{liii} Qutb’s statement has its roots in the work of the 13th century Islamic jurist, Ibn Taymiyyah, who stated that “the permission to fight for the Muslims is based on the permission of the fight in others.”^{liv} However, members believe that the Quran and Sunna mandate principles of proportionality in war. This includes the oft-expressed argument that Muhammad allegedly prohibited the destruction of the enemy’s harvest during wartime.^{lv} Muhammad, according to others, had also ruled against inflicting “superfluous evils” which consist of

massacres, unnecessary destruction, poison weapons, the killing of non-combatants to include the enemy's wounded, and proper treatment of all prisoners of war.^{lvi}

Therefore, it is absurd that some Western analysts believe that the Brotherhood views violence as a misuse of jihad. Common with much of the Brotherhood's rhetoric, is to first denounce violence only to follow up with nebulous and contradictory language that condones the use of violence. This is demonstrated in the Muslims of Europe Charter section on *jihad* that initially opposes violence, only to follow up with the claim that violence is sometimes "the human reaction of oppressed people."^{lvii} On the issue of terrorism, many Brotherhood members disagree solely because it becomes an action against "the people," who are usually Muslim, and not against "the rulers." As Tariq Ramadan posits, *jihad* is a struggle for "principles, not against people."^{lviii} This understanding is shared by al-Qaida core leadership who view the Islamic State's excessive violence against Muslim populations as counterproductive, since it tarnishes the Islamist struggle against the leaders of the Arab world and the West.

Conclusion

Although the scope of this research does not permit a full examination of Muslim Brotherhood affiliates in Europe, the author hopes that this survey has revealed that, while the message of Brotherhood affiliates may seem moderate at times, the organization's end goals have remained intact since its establishment. The intention here was not to argue that a thorough understanding of the European Brotherhood network's current message, will open up an opportunity for governments to build counternarratives to combat the group's influence. Due to flexibility of the group's strategy, it seems that the only way to combat these groups is through a "naming and shaming" process to flush out Brotherhood affiliates from the political and social spheres.

Although the Muslim Brotherhood has largely failed to bring about its desired Islamic reforms in Europe, its affiliates continue to strive towards this divine mission, and thus it is important for government officials to pay attention to what members are saying in both the public and, when cases permit, private domains. Indeed, the purpose of this research is to argue for close surveillance of these groups, rather than any government-led intervention that could violate important Western principles of pluralism and democracy. However, it is crucial for

European governments to take necessary precautions to understand and mitigate the threats that uphold these fundamental values held in Western society.

About the Author: Rory Devine

Rory Devine is a current master's candidate in the Nonproliferation and Terrorism Studies program at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies. He also serves as a Content Analyst at the Center for Homeland Defense and Security, Naval Postgraduate School.

Notes

ⁱ Lorenzo Vidino, "European Organization of the Muslim Brotherhood: Myth or Reality" in Bakker, Edwin, and Roel Meijer. *The Muslim Brotherhood in Europe*. Oxford University Press, 2014, pp. 54.

ⁱⁱ Al-Banna, Hassa. "Uniting Hearts Around a More Noble Goal," by Imam Hassan Al Banna (Speech)." *Havre De Savoir*, 13 Apr. 2015, URL: www.havredesavoir.fr.

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid."

^{iv} Ramadan, Tariq. "The Basics of Political Involvement." Tariq Ramadan Official Website, 3 Feb. 2017, URL: tariqramadan.com/english/the-basics-of-political-involvement/.

^v Salam, Abd Abdel. *Politics and Religion in the Modern West (Arabic)*. The European Council for Fatwa and Research, 2014.

^{vi} "Ameena Blake Speaks at the MAB Convention 2017." YouTube, Muslim Association of Britain, 10 Dec. 2017, URL: www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y3qpWQFSg_c.

^{vii} Ramadan, Tariq: "Islamic Awakening – Conversation with Tariq Ramadan: Practicing Jihad Al Nafs during Ramadan." *Press TV*, 6 July 2015, URL: tariqramadan.com/english/islamic-awakening-conversation-with-tariq-ramadan-practicing-jihad-al-nafs-during-ramadan/.

^{viii} See Bari, Muhammad Abdul. "Meet the Challenge, Make the Change A Call to Action for Muslim Civil Society in Britain." The Cordoba Foundation, Cordoba Papers: Vol 2, Issue I, 2013, URL: http://www.thecordobafoundation.com/attach/A5_TCF_CS_BARI_FINAL.pdf.

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^x Ramadan, Tariq. "In The West: First Attempts at Reform [6/6]." Tariq Ramadan Official Website, 14 Apr. 2016, URL: tariqramadan.com/english/in-the-west-first-attempts-at-reform-66/.

^{xi} Ibid.

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