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MUSLIM BROTHERS IN EUROPE

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Abstract

In the last ten years political Islam, as well as its aims and strategies, has developed into one of the most discussed political issues in Europe. Nevertheless scant attention has been paid to the concrete theoretical concepts lying behind the different political strategies of Islamist groups in Europe. This article intends to offer an insight into the different concepts of state and society defined by the Muslim Brotherhood, one of the most influential organizations of political Islam in Europe. The focus of the analysis is on those concepts that have been developed in and for Europe, as well as their relationship to different European discourses concerning the ideas of accommodation of religious practices and identities within the framework of the European secular states. In short, it offers an analysis of state-theoretical concepts of the Muslim Brotherhood in Europe as developed in the last ten years and their relationship with the dominant European discourses over state, civil society and democracy.

Keywords

Dunja Larise, Max Weber Fellow 2010-2011

Introduction

The Muslim Brotherhood (*Ikhwan al-Muslimin*) is one of the most influential movements of political Islam worldwide. The leading intellectuals of the Muslim Brotherhood, men such as Hassan al-Banâ, Sayyid Qutb or Hassan Turabi, have established the most essential ideas of the Islamic state and society over the last sixty years; ideas that have had a direct impact on the political destiny of many Muslim states and regions, including Egypt, Sudan, Palestine and Pakistan.

In the early sixties, as a result of the Nasserite repression in Egypt and the Bath'ist in Syria, but also following the waves of Muslim emigration to Western Europe, the Muslim Brotherhood established itself in Europe, where it evolved to become one of the leading contemporary movements of political Islam, providing a political as well as intellectual framework for the work of Islamic intellectuals like Tariq Ramadan in France or Yûsuf al-Qaradâwî at the global level, and also for the social, political and educational activities of influential European Islamic institutions and societies such as the European Council for Fatwa and Research (CEFR), the Forum of European Muslim Youth and Student Organisations (FEMYSO) or the Federation of Islamic Organisations in Europe (FIOE).

The Muslim Brotherhood is a political movement with an extremely complex organisational structure: appearing sometimes as a political organisation with a tight hierarchical organisational form but at the same time relying strongly on its clandestine structure as a global political movement. The political ideas and concepts of state and civil society, currently being developed in the context of a minority Muslim position in Western Europe, rely heavily on the theoretical work of intellectuals and organisations associated with the Brotherhood both formally and informally.

The Brotherhood's theoretical work has been influenced by state theoretical traditions of Islamic origin, but to a great extent also by secular political theories of European and US-American origin, as well as by the historical context and structural constraints in which and by which the Brotherhood developed.

Dealing with the concepts of state and society from the position of a minority, state theory of the Muslim Brotherhood in Europe confronted specific problems hitherto unknown to the Islamic political theory that emerged from the majority Muslim position in the Middle East. It has been confronted with problems similar to those faced by liberal theory, and later the Marxist theory of state, from the eighteenth century onwards, in particular a need to define the connection and the difference between the state and civil society.

The first two sections of this article are dedicated to a conceptual analysis of the notion of civil society in a European and a Muslim context by drafting a historical account of their mutual interconnectedness in the context of the emergence of the modern nation-state. The third section discusses the organisational structure of the Muslim Brotherhood in Europe, and the fourth section reviews the diversity of contemporary Islamic state theories.

The article concludes by giving an insight into the directions in which the Muslim Brotherhood scholarship on state and civil society in Europe is currently being developed by taking into account its relation with contemporary European debates on modalities of representation of religious and ethnic minorities, the accommodation of religion within a secular state framework and the influences of the new forms of the global political economy on the Islamic understanding of the state and its relation to society.

The concept of civil society

In the words of the eminent Turkish sociologist Serif Mardin "*civil society is a Western dream, a historical aspiration*"¹. The concept of "civil society" with its emphasis on human agency and autonomy of individuals from society and society from the state is, according to him, a strictly Western idea. The term "civility", on the contrary, designating an aspect of civic culture of every

¹ Serif Mardin, 'Civil Society and Islam' in *Civil Society: Theory, History, Comparison*, eds. J-A. Hall, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1995, p. 278.

day life practices of a given society in its historical context, is an idea shared through all civilisations and all times.

Mardin's view coincides in a certain sense with the view shared by the Marxist tradition in which the separation between civil society and the state is relative to a particular historical epoch, notably that of the emerging capitalist economy that was accompanied by the construction of a modern nation state. Both views share a common premise that the concrete modern notion of civil society does not represent a transhistoric category to be traced from ancient times onwards, but a derivative of specific historical (Marxist) or cultural (Mardin) conjuncture.

In constructivist terms, the division between civil society and the state is a purely conceptual division emerging from the context of eighteenth-century Europe. Being conceptual it means that there is no "real" or concrete borderline between society and the state this society inhabits. When state and society are regarded as separate entities it makes sense only if these are conceived as imaginary and analytical categories.

The liberal tradition views this problem in a slightly different way. This view is partially shared by the prominent scholar John Kaene whose work on civil society was pathbreaking in the nineties. He is well aware of the variety of meanings of the term civil society in early modern social theories, but nevertheless he holds that all were concerned with the "*political problem of how, and under which circumstances, state power can be controlled and rendered legitimate*"², which leads him to the conclusion (against the Marxist view) that "*the term civil society pre-dated the emergence of the bourgeoisie, being well developed, for instance, in classical and medieval political thought.*"³

In this regard I would agree that the problem of the control and legitimation of state power was one of the fundamental problems of political philosophy from its beginnings; in a certain sense it could even be claimed that these concerns have been the incentive for the evolution of political philosophy from the outset. I would also agree that the questions concerning control and legitimation of power have been crucial for the early modern theorising of state and society, but differently to Kaene I would argue that the concrete semantic content inhabiting the concept of civil society from the eighteenth century onwards, is fundamentally distinct from the content of *civitas socialis* as applied by pre-modern state theoretical thinkers.

The central novelty introduced in the debate about *civitas socialis* in the eighteenth century is that there, for the first time, civil society is conceived as a *relative autonomous category in relation to the state and as a power opposed to that of the state-power*. This, I would argue, is the fundamental difference to previous reasoning on state and society and the key element of a distinctive modern usage of the concept of civil society, as well as the pivotal conceptual theme around which the revival of the civil society debate in the twentieth century was conducted, evolving to be the cornerstone of a general understanding of the term civil society at the present.

Theory of the state in the late eighteenth century was far away from being a homogenous edifice. The themes revolving around questions concerning the relations between citizens, states and state authority provided a terrain for the variety of different theoretical positions. In this context it is important to point to some of the theoretical deadlocks that still mark the debate on historical allocation and evolution of the modern concept of civil society.

One of the most tenacious misunderstandings in the debate around civil society has been the effect of linguistic confusion regarding the meaning of the term *bürgerliche Gesellschaft* in the German philosophical tradition of eighteenth and nineteenth century. It is still generally accepted, if not taken for granted, that when Kant, Hegel or Puffendorf speak about *bürgerliche Gesellschaft* it can be handled the same way as the English term "civil society", which in the Anglo-Saxon philosophical tradition bore a substantially different meaning.

Bürgerliche Gesellschaft, which is to be found in the works of German political philosophers of the eighteenth and nineteenth century has a wider meaning than the English term civil society, and covers simultaneously notions of bourgeois society, civil society and the society

² John Keane, *Democracy and Civil Society*, Verso, London, 1988. pp. 32-3.

³ Ibid.

of citizens, which is a peculiarity of German social understanding of this historical epoch. The contemporary usage of the term civil society, as dominantly used in the modern liberal meaning, has been transmitted from English discourse, in which it re-emerged in the eighties, into German discourse with the notion of *Zivilgesellschaft* and not with *bürgerliche Gesellschaft* to emphasise the difference. Nevertheless, there is still a common practice in the contemporary literature on civil society written in the English language, to refer to the eighteenth-century notion of *bürgerliche Gesellschaft* as civil society.

The reason for going into such detail in regard to the conceptual history of the notion of civil society is that I believe that deficient knowledge about the exact historical genesis of notions employed to indicate the (often imagined) continuity of political ideas and concepts from ancient up to the present time, constitutes one of the most persistent impasse of contemporary liberal scholarship in the social sciences, which has wide implications precisely for the debate on different concepts of state and society in the Islamic historical tradition.

By the same token, I argue that the conceptual autonomy of civil society in regard to the state is an eighteenth-century novelty, which evolved from dilemmas emerging through the institution of the modern nation-state and developed within its specific social and political framework and not before. Accordingly, I claim that the conceptual division of state and society expressed through the relative autonomy of civil society from the state is a historical conceptual division derived from the concrete historical context of the emerging nation-state and cannot be meaningfully applied to the (previous) state formations outside of this historical context.

Civil society re-loaded

After almost 150 years and nearly complete disappearance from academic discourse, the concept of civil society re-emerged in the late eighties to subsequently evolve into one of the central pillars around which the debate about liberal democracy has spawned. The idea of an autonomous civil society as a guardian against the omnipotence of the power of the state re-appeared against the background of the critique towards the authoritarian states of the socialist block. It is crucial however to keep in mind that the centrality of the theme of civil society is not only that it is autonomous *but also that it is opposed to the power of the state*; this was to become a conceptual cornerstone of the contemporary liberal image of civil society from the eighties onwards, and had not been established before the eighteenth century, or more precisely not before Thomas Paine (1737 – 1809) and his answer to Edmond Burkes "*Reflexions on the Revolution in France*".⁴

An illustrative example of this new theoretical field, which revived the debate on civil society in the eighties, is the work of Czech historian Jan Tesar⁵, an inspiration for much later scholarship on civil society. By granting civil society the credit of being the best antidote to the totalitarian state, Tesar retrieved the central element of Paine's theory of autonomous civil society as opposed to state power by setting it in the context of a new liberal democratic theory.

Academic enthusiasm for the newly re-discovered concept of civil society in the early nineties has been suitably illustrated in the metaphor used by Kumar Krishan:

With it, as most of its uses clearly testify, we are in the realm of the normative, if not indeed the nostalgic. 'Civil society' sounds good; it has a good feel to it; it has the look of a fine old wine, full of depth and complexity. Who could possibly object to it, who not wish for its fulfilment?⁶

In the present article I use the term 'civil society' in its broad modern meaning (emerging from eighteenth-century political discourse) by which civil society is defined as the space of relative social autonomy from the state, but *which doesn't necessarily imply democratic guardianship or*

⁴ Edmond Burke and Thomas Paine, *Reflexions on the Revolution in France*, Anchor Press/ Doubleday, New York, 1973.

⁵ Jan Tesar, 'Totalitarian Dictatorships as a Phenomenon of the Twentieth Century and the Possibilities of Overcoming Them', *International Journal of Politics*, Vol. 11, No. 1, Spring 1981.

⁶ Kumar Krishan, 'Civil Society: An Inquiry into the Usefulness of a Historical Term', *British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 44, Issue 3, 1993.

opposition in relation to the state. For the concept that implies the latter, I use the term 'liberal concept of civil society' or 'Painian concept of civil society'. The term 'state', unless quoted otherwise, will be used in the meaning of modern nation-state.

The connection between the re-emergence of the civil society concept in the Painian sense in the eighties and the concomitant redefinition of (liberal) democracy in opposition to authoritarian political rule embodied in the repressive state apparatus of the socialist state, eventually referred to as "totalitarianism"⁷, became crucial for the direction in which the conceptualisation of the relation between state and society has been driven in the last two decades, on a global scale.⁸ The presence and sudden prominence of the discourse of civil society and democracy in the eighties, together with the earlier discursive shift in the social sciences and humanities termed "cultural turn" in the seventies, have had a direct impact on the political and theoretical approaches to the question of state and society (and their mutual relationship) of Muslim Brotherhood affiliated scholars and activists in Europe.

To trace the impact and (mostly unintended) relation between the evolution of the concept of civil society in Europe and the political theory cum political strategies of the Muslim Brotherhood (MB) in Europe it is necessary to introduce at this point another concept of civil society, developed by the Italian leftist intellectual Antonio Gramsci in the first thirty years of the twentieth century, which was based in both the eighteenth century idea of an autonomous civil society and Marxist teleology of emancipation. The Gramscian concept of civil society has come to play a pivotal role in so-called post-Marxism as well as in related political concepts, where there was an enthusiasm to re-discover the importance of "culture" for almost every aspect of social and political life. As I discuss in more detail further along, it is precisely the concept of "culture", which has become a fundamental basis on which the European MB build their political theories and strategies for Europe.

In his *Prison Notebooks*⁹ Gramsci elaborated the concept of civil society in the context of research on ideology. The power of the state is based on ideology which for Gramsci, unlike for the Marxist orthodoxy, is not directly driven out of the division of labour and capital given through the dominant mode of production and therefore also not necessarily confined to one dominant bourgeois ideology. Instead there are many competing ideologies in a given time, which stand in competition one to the other over hegemony in a respective society. Ideological hegemony builds on the consent of the people, consequently generating stable government. It cannot be imposed from above but it must be built on grassroots compliance. In contrast to Lenin and Trotsky, Gramsci did not believe in the revolutionary way of fundamental social change in which a change of regime would precede a change in the spirit of the people, or in a certain sense could even enable a broad ideological change to take place in the first place. Gramsci, on the contrary, believed that ideological hegemony must be achieved first and that the power over the state will naturally follow being more legitimate and more durable than that fought for by revolution.

In a certain sense it can be claimed that the concept of civil society elaborated by Hassan al-Banna, the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt in 1928, was in a way Gramscian and in a way Painian.

His concept of *da'wa* regarded a state as the tool of foreign oppression and consequently as an enemy: *da'wa* was a combination of preaching and political agitation with the goal of awakening people to the Islamic political agenda and with the final aim of establishing of an Islamic regime and/or state, and was elaborated in the early years of the movement under colonial conditions. It provided a seven-pronged plan of gradual strategic change beginning with the

⁷ For the conceptual evolution of the notion of "totalitarianism" see: Enzo Traverso, *Il totalitarismo – Storia di un dibattito*, Bruno Mondadori, Milano, 2002.

⁸ For the institutional and actor based connection between the concepts of democracy, human rights and civil society in the late 20th century see: Nicolas Guillhot, *The Democracy Makers - Human Rights and the Politics of Global Order*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2005.

⁹ Antonio Gramsci, *Quaderni di carcere*, Editori Riuniti, Roma, 1971.

individual, over family, neighbourhood and community towards a state and finally a world system.¹⁰ It built on the necessity of previous ideological consent for the achieving of the final goal of the Islamic state and was programmatically non-revolutionary. Similarly to Gramsci, the way to state power was through civil society and ideological hegemony was its political strategy. In accord with Thomas Paine, civil society was conceived as an autonomous entity, potentially conflicting with the state given its non-Islamic and, in the beginning, foreign character.

Civil society discourse in an Islamic context

The debate about civil society in the Muslim world emerged in the nineties against the background of a global revival in civil society discourse. The Institute of Ismaili Studies in London dedicated the scholastic year 2000/01 to contemporary perspectives in this debate. The result was a published collection of essays in which different positions on this issue were presented.¹¹

The debate to which some of the contributors referred and which was implicitly present in the introduction revolved around the question of whether there is something like an indigenous Islamic civil society. The answers that developed, and the literature that was debated, could have subsequently been divided into two camps: those who believed that civil society is a "Western"¹² invention, imported into the Islamic discourse from outside and accordingly having no genuine reality in Islamic society, and those who argued that civil society in the form of *societas civilis* can be traced to the very beginnings of Islamic civilisation.¹³

In this regard the argument seems to have confronted the same omission, in perceiving the conceptual discontinuity of the historic notion of civil society, which can be seen in liberal scholarship on the same issue, by attempting to apply historical theoretical concepts to realities that are outside the context in which these particular approaches have been forged. In this vein it runs the danger of de-contextualisation and *transhistorisation* of theoretical concepts by projecting them (as analytical tools shaped for contemporary political analysis) onto those historical social conditions in which the social relations, which the concept was constructed to mirror and scrutinise, did not exist.

If we accept the constructivist stance on the historical evolution of the concepts that I adopt in this article and have elaborated upon above, by which the semantic value of the notion of civil society reflects a concrete modern concept emerging as the conceptual answer to the modern condition, and as such bearing an inherently different meaning to previous concepts, which reflected pre-modern discourses on society – like civic virtue or civility – then we can conclude that there is as little sense in searching for civil society in early Medina as in Ancient Rome.

Although the questions of administration of ethnic and religious diversity, legitimation of political power and the political regulation of everyday life were already on the agenda in the

¹⁰ Hassan al-Banna 'Aufbruch zum Licht' in *Der politische Auftrag des Islam - Programme und Kritik zwischen Fundamentalismus und Reformen, Originalstimmen aus der Islamischen Welt*, eds. Andreas Meier, Peter Hammer Verlag, Wuppertal, 1994.

¹¹ Aryn B. Sajoo (eds.) *Civil Society in the Muslim World - Contemporary Perspectives*, Taurus Publishers in association with The Institute of Ismaili Studies, London, 2002.

¹² There is a common practice, not only in academic discourse, to refer to Western versus Muslim civilisations, values, beliefs, inventions etc. I regard this dichotomy as simplistic, hardly accurate and even dangerous for it doesn't take account of an enormous inner diversity of practices, beliefs, theories, ideas and histories, which have been brought out by diverse and unique historical conjunctures. Second, it implies clear civilisational borderlines for which I see no historical evidence but rather arbitrary summarisations, and finally, even in the choice of terms to designate these allegedly homogenous civilisational blocks there is an underlining salient inconsequence: "West" and subsequently "Western" civilisation are designated in topographical terminology whereas "Muslim world" reflects an imagination forged in religious cum cultural terms.

¹³ Aryn B. Sajoo, 'Introduction: Civic Quests and Bequests' in *Civil Society in the Muslim World - Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. A. B. Sajoo, Taurus Publishers in association with The Institute of Ismaili Studies, London, 2002. pp. 1–35. See also: Ernest Gellner, *Muslim Society*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1981., Chris Hahn and Elisabeth Dunn (eds.) *Civil Society: Challenging Western Models*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1996., August Richard Norton, *Civil Society in the Middle East*, vol. 2, Brill, Leiden, 1995.

imperial conditions of pre-modern times and although the philosophy dealing with the question of a "good society" had its predecessors such as Aristotle, and in the Aristotelian inspired *Falasifa* philosophers as early as Al-Farabi and the society of Ikhwan al-Safa, the debate about civil society in the Islamic context did not emerge until the twentieth century as an inner Islamic reaction to the modern secular, authoritarian states of the pre- and post-colonial period.

By this token there is little sense in searching for a discourse on civil society in Islamic political thinking¹⁴ before the theoretical reflexions on the modern state emerged. These particular reflexions were respectively introduced into Islamic political theory by the works of Islamic reformers from late nineteenth and early twentieth century: Muhammad Abduh, Jamaludin al-Afgâni and finally Rashid Ridâ.

Rashid Rîda was one of the first Islamic thinkers to elaborate the concept of the modern Islamic state, different to that of the traditional *Caliphate*. A disciple of the first generation Islamic reformist Muhammad Abduh, he was at the centre of the early debate about Islamic perspectives on the succession of the *Caliphate*, which was abolished by Kemal Attatürk in the early twenties. He was the first to introduce the idea of an Islamic democracy. His concept of an Islamic democracy rejects, or rather radically redefines, the main pillars of liberal democracy – the principle of popular sovereignty, man-made laws and equal political rights for all – shifting the focus of democratic discourse to the questions of the relation between the government and the governed, incorporated in the institution of consultation, *shûrâ*. This approach remained fundamental to Islamic democratic scholarship as developed by the Muslim Brotherhood until today.

Although already present in the works of Rashid Ridâ, most notably through his critical stance on Ibn Khaldun – for, as he saw it, his glorification of group solidarity (*asabiyya*) as a powerful political element¹⁵ – the emphasis on civil society in the modern sense and the consequent elaboration of this concept for the realm of practical policy is established explicitly for the first time in the work of Hassan al-Banna. Differently to Rîda who paints a modern, but nevertheless ideal model of an Islamic state, Al-Banna's frame of work is precisely an existing non-Islamic state and accordingly the concrete strategies of how to overcome it. In this vein, Al-Banna regards Islam not only as the basis of the government of an (*telos* of) Islamic state but also as a comprehensive ideology with the programme based on three principles:

- (a) Islam is a comprehensive, self-evolving (*Mutakâmil bi-dhâtihi*) system: it is the ultimate path of life, in all its spheres; (b) Islam emanates from and is based on, two fundamental sources, the Qur'ân and the prophetic Tradition; (c) Islam is applicable to all times and places and his movement is: a *Salafiyyah* message, a Sunni way, a Sûfi truth, a political organisation, an athletic group, a scientific and cultural link, an economic enterprise and a social idea.¹⁶

Being at the same time a political, cultural, scientific, economic and even sporting enterprise, different and autonomous from the state (as long as the *telos* of an Islamic state has not yet been fulfilled) Islam is conceived as inherently a social, holistic political-ideological-economic system that can be understood in terms of an integralist grassroots political ideology.

The modern Muslim brotherhood retained the basic element of this concept, notably the centrality of a grassroots political mobilisation, but in its further development it was enriched with an awareness of the importance of popular culture and media for shaping social networks and subsequently for the success of every social-political project in an age of mass media communication. These were aspects to which Hassan al-Banna reacted rather reluctantly.

Another new global theoretical trend in the theorisation of state and civil society that

¹⁴ It important to emphasise that when I speak of Islamic political theory it refers only to the theory built within an Islamic context, and does not include a wide array of political theory, which emerged in a secular Muslim context.

¹⁵ Aziz Al-Azmeh, *Ibn Khaldun - An Essay in Reinterpretation*, Central European University Press, Budapest, 2003.

¹⁶ Hassan al-Banna, *Al-Mu'tamar al-Khâmis*, Cairo, 1939, pp. 21-22. English quotation in: Richard P. Michell, *The Society of Muslim Brothers*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1969, p. 14.

emerged in the nineties, had a strong influence on the direction in which the Muslim Brotherhood contemporary theorisation of civil society has since evolved. This new theoretical field, which is extremely heterogeneous both in terms of concepts as in terms of actors, can be widely defined as "post-secularism". This involves, in a critical debate challenging the normatives of secularism, what can be said to be nearly the only common ground of the wide array of theoretical positions coming under this label. It comprises different, sometimes even radically opposed, theoretical positions that range from post-modernist and post-Marxist to neo-conservative and fundamentalist.¹⁷

One of the most prominent contemporary Islamic intellectuals dealing with the concept of civil society in a post-secular context is the Tunisian-born scholar Rashid al-Gannûshî. His works are influential in the intellectual circles of the Muslim Brotherhood and widely disseminated through their channels. Like many other influential Islamic thinkers, he regards secularism as an imported concept imposed on Arabs the Western colonialism, utterly foreign to Arab political thinking and consequently a condition to be overcome through the gradual move towards an Islamic state.

An intellectual ability to combine political engagement and public speaking with his theoretical work in a flexible unit that appeals to activists, intellectuals and political elites alike, paired with an awareness of the importance of civil society solidarity and communication networks, qualifies Gannûshî, according to sociologist Tâher Labîb, to be defined as a Gramscian "organic intellectual"¹⁸. This qualification is based on the distinction Gramsci made between so called ecclesiastical and organic intellectuals, the former being intrinsically bound to aristocracy and the latter to the civil, public and democratic, grassroots social forces.

Gannûshî points to reform and the non-violent, ideological conquest of society in order to achieve reforms for which the long-term goal is the state, however not as a goal in itself, but as, according to him, the only viable way to guarantee the full implementation of *Shari'ah*. Gannûshî is well aware that the state, which is not based upon civic consent, has neither duration nor stability. In this vain, strong civil society is crucial in his writings, but similarly to the state not as an aim in itself, but as a means to preserve the rule of law: the *Shari'ah*.

For Rashid al-Gannûshî, as well as Mohamed Ghazâlî, as early as the twelfth century, the (Islamic) state is a means to the preservation of *maslaha*. "*What we mean by maslaha is the preservation of maqsûd (objective) and the law (shar') which consists of five things: preservation of religion, of life, of reason, of descendants, and of property.*"¹⁹ These objectives, reiterated by Gannûshî have parallels, not to be ignored, with the Lockean *raison d'état* of the liberal state, especially in the explicit account of property rights. In the context of modernity this also entails the liberal idea of the narrow state, the state seen as functional in terms of being an institutional guarantee of the rule of law and of property rights, but unlike the narrow liberal state the ideal modern Islamic state is supposed to retain an organic ideological unity of civil society under the auspices of the state.

In these terms another parallel to the Gramscian concept appears. An autonomous civil society is a means to accomplish an ideal of the state in which the difference, and at the same time the autonomy, of civil society is to be gradually abolished by the introduction of an holistic

¹⁷ It would go far beyond the scope of this article to examine in detail different theoretical currents of "post-secularism". For an overview of the wide spectrum of debate see among others: Mariano Barbato and Friedrich Kratochwil, 'Towards a post-secular political order?' *European Political Science Review*, Vol.1, Nr.3, 2009. pp. 317 - 40., William Connolly, *Why I'm not a secularist?*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1999., M Cooke, 'A secular state for a post-secular society? Postmetaphysical political theory and the place of religion' *Constellations*, Vol. 14, Nr. 2, 2007, pp. 224 - 38., Jürgen Habermas and Josef Ratzinger, *The Dialectics of Secularisation: On Reason and Religion*, Ignatius Press, San Francisco, 2006., Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1991, Frederick Mark Gedicks, 'The Religious, the Secular and the Antithetical' *Capital University Law Review* Nr.113, 1991.

¹⁸ Tâher Labîb, *Gramsci nel mono arabo*, Gli Informatziori, Nr. 4, Istituto Gramsci Roma, Roma, 1989.

¹⁹ Abû Hâmîd al-Ghazâlî, *Al-Mustasfa min 'ilm al-usûl*, Vol. 1, Baghdad, 1970, pp. 286-7, quoted in English in: Mauhammad Khalid Masud, *Islamic Legal Philosophy: A study of Abi Ishaq al-Shâtîbî's Life and Thought*, Islamic Research Institute, Islamabad, 1977, p.153.

state in which it is no longer necessary or meaningful. This intrinsic functionalism of civil society as a means to an end has been one of the central cornerstones of criticism in regard to the Gramscian concept of civil society. The advocates of the Gramscian approach insist that, although teleological, the state in Gramscian theory is nevertheless, in its final outcome, subordinate to civil society.²⁰ This subordination takes place, in a certain sense, behind the backs of, and even against the will of, those who plan it and fight for it, simply by the material nature of the state, which is in itself nothing but the concentration of power relations in civil society, materialised in the form of institutions.²¹ I would argue that the same, unintentional "victory" of civil society over the state could be derived from Gannūshi's concept, when embedded in a similar state-theoretical context.

The Muslim Brotherhood in Europe

Before I go further in my analysis of the political and ideological spectrum of state and civil society scholarship by the Muslim Brotherhood, I consider it necessary to first clarify the terms in which I operate in this analysis.

Contrary to the majority of scholars working in the field of political Islam and the broader political sciences I am rather reluctant to use the term "Islamism" as a conceptual tool for analysis. The main reason for this is that the way in which it is commonly used in contemporary debate means that it appears diffuse, insufficiently precise and therefore in my opinion ill recommended for the purpose of a more nuanced or differentiated investigation. Instead I operate with the terms integralism, fundamentalism, reformism and jihadism to describe concrete situations and strategies within the spectrum of political Islam in order to be able to demarcate specific problems more precisely.

Under the spectrum of political Islam I include those theories and movements that derive, or believe to derive, their political concepts and strategies from the Islamic religion. In these terms, Islamic integralism accounts for the conception of Islam conceived as regulatory normative in all aspects of the civil, political, cultural and economic life of a society. Fundamentalism however refers to those religious movements and organisations, which reduce the complexity of a religious message to a limited number of fundamental principles and doctrines. In regard to strategies for achieving political change, political Islam can be reformist, meaning that it favours gradual, non-violent strategies of action, and jihadist, which endorses revolutionary strategies that do not revoke the use of violence.²²

Emphasising Islam as a total way of life, and gradual reform as their strategy, the Muslim Brotherhood can be broadly ascribed to the integralist-reformist direction in political Islam even though, at different times, different branches and influential intellectuals also subscribed to more or less explicit jihadist strategies.

One of the central figures of reference for these jihadist strategies is Sayyid Qutb, a Muslim Brotherhood intellectual and leading figure of the Egyptian branch in the early sixties. Qutb applied the pre-modern Islamic doctrine of division between the House of Islam (*dar al islam*) and the House of War (*dar al harb*), referring to the non-Islamic world not only as to the world of non-Muslims, but also to the modern secular Arab dictatorships of his time. In his view the borders between the two worlds were no longer to be defined merely in geographical terms but in the terms of internal ideological division, which now flowed through the very core of society. In this vein the world of war and the world of Islam existed parallel within one society, marking an invisible division between those who embraced the idea of an Islamic state and the concomitant Islamic way of life, and everyone else.²³

Although highly controversial within the Brotherhood itself, Qutb's ideas are still a strong

²⁰ Norberto Bobbio, *Gramsci e la concezione della società civile*, Feltrinelli, Milano, 1976.

²¹ Nicos Poulantzas, *Staatstheorie: Politischer Überbau, Ideologie, Autoritärer Etatismus*, VSA, 2002.

²² For a more detailed discussion of this distinction see: Thomas Schmidinger and Dunja Larise, *Zwischen Gottesstaat und Demokratie – Handbuch des politischen Islam*, Deuticke, Wien, 2008.

²³ Sayyid Qutb, *Milestones*, American Trust Publications, 2005.

point of reference for some of the Brothers in Europe, his *tasfīr* (Koranic exegesis) in particular "remains a frequent reference for many MB militants, whether these are partisans or simply those who consider themselves close to his ideas."²⁴

Mohamed Badee, a 2009 elected member of the Muslim Brotherhood guidance bureau in Egypt, asserted that he would follow the reformist path of Sayyid Qutb. Similarly to the earlier Tariq Ramadan²⁵ he therefore made the hardly convincing attempt to depict Sayyid Qutb as a peaceful reformer.²⁶

The militant wing of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt had emerged before the period of Sayyid Qutb's activism, during the first phase of the movement, as al-Banâ was still at its head. Nevertheless, the direction of the movement under his auspices was explicitly dedicated to an ideological awakening, while the means of military combat were seen as restricted to situations in which the movement was confronted with violent repression.

Hassan al-Banâ was no state-theorist, so that the concrete form of state was never developed in his writings. Therefore the emphasis has been set on concrete strategies of organisation and the structuring of a political movement. From its early beginnings the Muslim Brotherhood was structured like a political movement with a broad scope, which was divided into national branches but at the same time engendered a supranational dimension. One of the main pillars upon which an already very early success was built upon was the awareness of the importance of a financial base to support the movement and its activities, which implied an international network. The idea of creating a global movement was thus already present in its early days.

The first presence of *Ikhwan* in Europe can be dated to the 1950s, when the first small groups of activists fleeing the repression in the Middle East began to emigrate to Europe and North America. Most of them were middle-class, well-educated and already experienced partisans of the Brotherhood in the Middle East and, although small in numbers, they began to organise very quickly. Emigration to Europe was not part of any strategic choice but primarily the effect of the personal decisions of individual activists to avoid persecution in their home countries by moving to Europe.²⁷

By the early seventies the activities and strategies, as well as the outlook of the Muslim Brotherhood in Europe changed as an effect of the adaptation to the exigencies of time, which saw massive waves of Muslim immigration to Europe in the sixties and seventies. The Brotherhood's concern ceased to be concentrated on the education of small groups of students from Muslim countries studying in Europe, and became broader. It now put first the wish to become a force of representation and identification for the growing Muslim community across Europe.²⁸ In the context of mass immigration of Muslims to Europe, their ideas about the role of Muslims in Europe underwent substantial change, from the idea of Europe as a safe refuge for activists to the idea of Europe as *dar al dawa* (the land of preaching), the space in which Muslims live as a minority, respect the majority law and have a duty to spread their religion by peaceful means.²⁹

As their founder Hassan al-Banna had already recognised, the European Muslim Brotherhood was well aware that the organisational success of every political movement depends

²⁴ Brigitte Maréchal *The Muslim Brothers in Europe – Roots and Discourse*, Brill, Leiden/Boston, 2008. p. 109.

²⁵ Maréchal, p. 108.

²⁶ Interview with Mohamed Badee: 'We will continue on Qutb's path to reform,' at the official website of MB: <http://www.ikhwanweb.com/article.php?id=22320&ref=search.php> (accessed Feb, 21 2011).

²⁷ "The presence of the Islamic Movement in Western countries was at first guided by the Almighty and not planned by the Movement. Young men and women had emigrated there to escape with their religion from the rifts tearing their homeland apart and to seek knowledge, freedom and safety, then they found very good opportunities for working and spreading the Call amongst their fellow Easterners, scholars and others alike." In: Yusuf al Qaradawi, *Priorities of the Islamic Movement in the Coming Phase*, Awakening Publications, Swansea, 2000, p. 87.

²⁸ Al-Qaradawi, 2000.

²⁹ Wasif Shadid and Sjoerd Koningsveld, 'Loyalty to Non-Muslim Government', in *Political Participation of and Identities of Muslims in Non-Muslim states*, eds. W.A.R. Shadid and P.S. van Koningsveld, Kok Pharos, Kampen, 1996.

directly on their ability to attract generous funds in support of their mission. By redefining their mission for Europe, in which the establishment of an Islamic state ceased to be the central objective (at least in the foreseeable future), to the objective of representation and Islamization of the growing European Muslim community, the new structure of the international organisation emerged, which opened new spaces for networking and fund raising.

In 1973 the collaboration between the European Muslim Brotherhood, now already an international movement, and the Saudi initiated Muslim World League led to the foundation of the Islamic Council of Europe with Egyptian born Salem Azzam, later Saudi Ambassador to U.K, as director. The ICE engaged in activities such as promoting high profile conferences on Islam, lobbying with European Institutions and providing financial support for Muslim organisations in Europe.³⁰

In the context of the needs of their new role in Europe, Muslim Brotherhood activists thoroughly re-organised their structures, which now differed radically from those in which the Muslim Brotherhood in the Middle East was engaged. Instead of national branches and strict structures of membership, the European Brothers organised themselves in a very innovative and flexible way. They built at the same time a clandestine organisation, a political-ideological movement and an informal international organisation, through which again more formal organisational structures were channelled, such as think-thanks, institutes, cultural and religious associations, financial institutions, charity foundations and lobbying agencies. The Muslim Brotherhood in Europe does not exist as a formal organisation, but as a highly complex combination of informal and formal associational structures.

In the words of Mohamed Habib, first deputy chairman of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood:

There are entities that exist in many countries all over the world. These entities have the same ideology, principle and objectives but they work in different circumstances and different contexts. So, it is reasonable to have decentralization in action so that every entity works according to its circumstances and according to the problems it is facing and in their framework.

This actually achieves two objectives: First: It adds flexibility to movement. Second: It focuses on action. Every entity in its own country can issue its own decision because it is more aware of the problems, circumstances and context in which they are working. However, there is some centralization in some issues. These entities can have dialogue when there is a common cause that faces Arabs or Muslims over their central issues like the Palestinian cause. At that time, all of them must cooperate for it. I want to confirm that while some see that Palestine caused rifts among the Arabs, we see that this cause is the one for which all Arabs unite.³¹

The structures in Europe are even more complex and even more informal as is made clear by the interview with Habib, and the rejection of many activists and intellectuals working in the ideological galaxy of the Muslim Brotherhood in Europe to be formally connected to the Brotherhood – this goes so far as to imply that there will be legal consequences if anyone tries to formally connect them to the Muslim Brotherhood as an organisation. The question of who in fact is a Muslim Brother in Europe and how the movement can be grasped in concrete terms has become one of the issues most difficult to deal with, not only for the general public and political decision makers, but also for scholars in the field.

It turned out to pose a big challenge especially for positivist and behaviouralist political science, which is the overwhelming mainstream of the entire discipline. From the early fifties onwards, political science as an academic discipline began to divorce from political philosophy and discourse-based methodological approaches to give a scientific credibility only to those types of research that apply methodologies borrowed mainly from the natural sciences, which entail exact measurements of exact measurable phenomena. This approach may have proved to be

³⁰ Lorenzo Vidino, *The New Muslim Brotherhood in the West*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2010.

³¹ Interview with Mohamed Habib in *Al Ahrar Daily*, reported by the MB official website, June 16, 2008, <http://www.ikhwanweb.com/article.php?id=17267&ref=search.php> (accessed March 17, 2011).

suitable for some areas of political analysis, like the measurement of voting behaviour and the organisational structures of traditional political parties, but it turned out to be less appropriate to grasp the growing informality of economical, political or social structures in the contemporary world, of which the European Muslim Brotherhood offers an excellent example.

Yussuf Nada, one of the founding members of the MB Network in Europe rejects even the designation as an informal political movement as too confining for the description of the MB and proposes instead a "common way of thinking"³².

He refers here to common thought, which is admittedly not always easy to trace in the wide array of different positions of different scholars. The theoretical building of the MB is far from being a homogenous unit. Nevertheless there are stable matrices to be observed in the work of every scholar belonging to the ideological universe of the MB. In the first place this is seen in the reliance on the chain of authority from the Muslim Brotherhood of the (recent) past, of which the authority of at least the founder, Hassan Al-Banna, remains ultimately unquestionable. As for the others, most notably Sayyid Qutb, Mustafâ Al-Sibâî (the founder of the Syrian branch of the MB) as well as more recent or contemporary figures such as Muhammad Al-Ghazâlî and Yûsuf Al-Qaradâwî, there were and still are attempts at critical engagement with their work (in the case of Qutb, re-interpretations) from different positions but no attempt can be observed to dismiss or even radically challenge any of these important figures.

The allegiance to the shared past, embodied in the form of a chain of personal authority, is one of the most reliable indicators in allocating actors in the spectrum of the MB for most scholars. But I would argue that there are also few ideological bases, or rather conceptual pillars of what Mohamed Habib refers to as shared "*ideology, principles and objectives*", which are universally accepted and hitherto unchallenged within the spectrum of the international MB. These fundamental pillars are: Islam as a total way of life, gradual reform towards an Islamic society as mapped out by Hassan Al-Banna, the idea of being the middle way that encompasses all different schools of the spectrum of Sunni Islamic thought, and finally, an unconditional support for the Palestinian cause. I would regard these to be the minimal conditions of general agreement by all actors regarding themselves, being however loosely attached to the heterogeneous spectrum of the international MB, regardless of whether the former is considered a political movement or more broadly as a school of thought.

Additional to conceptual analysis and biographical research a very useful methodological tool for setting the network boundaries by complex organisational structures of political movements is given by social network analysis. The advantages of this methodological approach for the setting of network boundaries of clandestine political networks are primarily in its relational and event-based techniques. It measures social connectedness of actors as well as their participation in different classes of events as agenda setting mechanisms based on the common political goal.³³

By using this method it is possible to render structural connections visible, primarily in the form of personal overlaps between organisations and their stakeholders, like for example formal MB, Federation of Islamic Organisations in Europe (FIOE), Union des organisations islamiques de France UOIF, Institut Européen des Sciences Humaines (IESH) or Council for Fatwa and Research (CFR).

State Concepts in Political Islam

State theory in Islamic scholarship has a long history. The rise of Islam was connected with a vast expansion of the territories belonging to the new community of believers. It advanced a new form of empire-state to the previously tribal society. The conquest of Persia and Byzantine territories in Syria shaped the new, emerging Muslim concept of the state as much as the experience of ruling over an

³² Vidino, 2010, p. 42.

³³ On boundary definition in social network analysis see: Edward O. Laumann/ Peter V. Marsden and David Prensky, 'The Boundary Specification Problem in Network Analysis', in *Research Methods in Social Network Analysis*, eds. Linton C. Freeman/ Douglas R. White and A. Kimball Romney, Transaction Publishers, New Jersey, 1992.

immense empire populated by different ethnic and religious groups. The succession of dynasties throughout the first centuries of Islam and the intrusion of Mongol tribes in the twelfth century posed further challenges to a Muslim state theory in construction.

The central fact concerning Muslim political theory is its attachment to *Sharī'ah* – Islamic law based on the *Kur'an* and *Sunna*, which was developed in the first centuries of Islam. The state form of Islamic empires throughout the centuries was *Caliphate*, a form of state-power which provided the (mostly formal) unity between state and religious power.³⁴

The institution of *Caliph* was introduced in the crisis following the dispute over the succession of the prophet Muhammad as the head of the community of the believers (*Umma*), in the seventh century, and ended with the dissolution of the *Caliphate* under Kemal Atatürk in 1924. In the idea-typical conception of early Muslim political philosophers, the *Caliph* was not only the head of the community, but also a spiritual leader and the head of state. He should not only be gifted with virtue and right belief, but also be a member of the *Kuraish* – the tribe of the prophet. For the political theology of *Shī'a*, which underlined the spiritual virtue of the family of the Prophet originating from Ali and Fatima (the daughter of the Prophet), the ruler and spiritual leader of the community, the *Imam*, must have belonged to this line of succession.

The idea of *Caliphate* was not an idea of territorially limited state or empire, but that of the world community united under the banner of faith. This concept, by definition, could not provide a space for differing political state-entities within the Muslim world. The political reality nevertheless, began to challenge this idea-typical state concept right from the beginning. The struggle for political power between different Arab dynasties, and later also newcomers, transformed the initially universal *Caliphate* into territorially fragmented political units, at the time even differing *Caliphates*, in which the institution of the *Caliph* metamorphosed into a merely symbolic category.

The cleavage between the imagined order of an ideal community and the hard political reality led to romanticizing the early *Caliphate*³⁵ in later Muslim political theory, which has been feeding the political imagination of neo-fundamentalist and integralist movements up until today.

The dissolution of the *Caliphate* in 1924, which followed the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire one year earlier, and the simultaneous threat of colonisation by foreign powers posed new challenges to Islamic state theory. An overwhelming part of *Ulama* (Islamic scholars) saw in the *Caliphate* the only guarantee for the preservation of an (when even symbolic) Islamic social order and reacted dismissively at its abolition. Their main argument was that Islamic law doesn't foresee any separation of religion (*din*) and rule/state (*dawla*). This argument is still one of the main cornerstones of religious integralism in Islam. Still, it was already challenged in 1925 by the influential *Al-Azhar* Islamic scholar Alī Abd ar-Râziq.³⁶

Abd ar-Râziq was not the only one to challenge the concept of *Caliphate* from the position of Islamic jurisprudence. As already mentioned above, another famous Islamic scholar, Rashid Ridâ, criticized the historic *Caliphate*³⁷, but contrary to the position of ar-Râziq, who dismissed the idea of the inseparability of religion and state altogether, he stuck to the concept of their integral nature, albeit transforming it into the vision of a modern Islamic state. The idea of an Islamic state as promulgated today by the Muslim Brotherhood and movements emerging from it, like the Palestinian *Hamas*, is to be found in the state theory of Rashid Ridâ. Although endorsing the ideal of an universal *Umma*, he was nevertheless a fierce supporter of Arab nationalism, a stance many *Ikhwan* will accredit, in contrast to *Salafiyya* and *Wahabiyya*.³⁸

³⁴ Ann K.S. Lambton, *State and Government in Medieval Islam*, Routledge Curzon, London and New York, 1981.

³⁵ The era of the leadership of the first four *Caliphs*: *Abu-Bakr*, *Umar*, *Uthman* and *Ali*, called also rightly guided Caliphs or *Râshidûn*.

³⁶ Ali Abderraziq, *L'Islam et les fondements du pouvoir*, La Découverte, Paris, 1994.

³⁷ Ridâ introduces a distinction between the historic *Caliphate* and the ideal one. His criticism is directed to the historic *Caliphate* only.

³⁸ Both *Wahabiyya* and *Salafiyya* movements emerged in the eighteenth century. *Wahabiyya*, the official theological doctrine of Saudi Arabia, has roots in the teachings of Muhammad ibn-Abd al-Wahhab, who limited Islam to a rigid monotheism,

Two striking differences exist between Salafī and Wahabi based political theology and the political theology of Rashid Ridā and consequently the Muslim Brotherhood, which have consequences for their state theories: in contrast to some exponents of *Salafīyya* and *Wahabiyya*, Ridā acknowledges, *within certain limits*, the principle of man-made laws and the democratic organisation of government.

The condition for the limited application of the first is given by Ridā's enhancement of *Ijtihad* – independent legal judgment. Whereas modern Salafīyya and Wahabiyya theological doctrines forbid *Ijtihad* and enforce an orthodox, literal interpretation of the *Kur'an* and *Sunna*, the stance of the Muslim Brotherhood is always in favour of *Ijtihad* as the source for legislation of the modern Islamic state. Thanks to this feature it is possible that the law making becomes an ongoing effort to find rational solutions for unprecedented problems. The *Sharī'ah* keeps its position as a fundamental authority, but there is also a corpus of man-made law, which is subordinate to it in the case of a conflict between the two, but otherwise accepted as a binding force.

The second difference concerns the principle of popular sovereignty. There are two instances, which are regarded a guarantee for a democratic choice of government (which is bound to *Sharī'ah*): the principle of *Shūrā*, or consultation between the ruler and the ruled, and the predominance of the *Ulama* in government structures.³⁹ The principle of *Shūrā* is, as elaborated earlier, also a cornerstone of the legitimisation of Islamic democracy.

The second issue has also been adopted by modern *Shī'a* state theory, as formulated by Ayatollāh Rūhollāh al-Mūsāwī al-Khomeinī in his concept of *Wilāyat-al-fakīh*, (the government of the Islamic scholars). The tradition of *Twelver Shī'a*, to which Khomeini adhered, has been historically marked by political quietism, due to the fact of the absence of the legitimate Imam. The last legitimate Imam of Twelver *Shī'a*, Muhammad al-Mahdī disappeared as a child in the ninth century. *Twelver Shī'a* believes he would live in Occultation and will appear at the end of time.

In his state theory Khomeini dismissed political quietism, claiming that an Islamic political organisation of the state has to be provided even in the time of Occultation, which can be supported by the representation based on the concept developed by *Sunni* scholars in the first Islamic centuries, known as *siyāsa shar'īya*.⁴⁰ This concept stipulates a legislation bound to *shar'īya*, which is to be interpreted and executed by the council of Islamic scholars, who govern the state in place of the absent Imam. Although harbouring reservations about the concept of *Wilāyat-al-fakīh* to begin with, Muhammad Husain Fadllalāh, the founder of the Lebanese *Hisbullah*, endorsed this concept later in his political struggle.

Influential Pakistani Sunni scholar Abu'l A'lā Maudūdī also adopted the key concepts of the state as developed by Rashid Ridā. Although the situation in Pakistan was different to the situation in Egypt, where the Muslim Brotherhood emerged – Islam in Pakistan can be said to have been the *raison d'être* of the foundation of the state – many of the state theoretical ideas formed by Ridā and his teacher Muhammad Abduh are present in the state theory of Maudūdī and the *Jamā'at-i-Islāmī*, of Pakistani origin and an internationally active organisation of political Islam. The most important

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a literal interpretation of the *Qur'an* and a no less rigid morality and law. Islamic law according to Ibn-Wahab must warrant that all legal decisions can be deduced directly from the Koran.

The *Salafīyya* movement (*as-Salafī* – the ancestors) was founded by Islamic reformers, scholars such as Muhammad Abduh, Muhammad Rashid Ridā and Jamāl-al-Dīn al-Afghānī. Abduh argued that the ancestors of the times of the prophet spawned a great civilization, which had to be resuscitated by the Muslims of the present time. Both movements share the ideal of the early Muslim community in Medina as a reference for the present Islamic community.

In the twentieth century *Salafīyya* changed into the movement, which can be designated as *neo-Salafīyya* and which differs from the *Salafīyya* of the nineteenth century primarily by their rejection of the *Ijtihad* (independent legal judgement). For original *Salafīyya*, *Ijtihad* was an important tool used to reconcile the Islamic faith of the ancestors with the modern world. This position has been incorporated into the state-theoretic scholarship of the Muslim Brotherhood, which has evolved to be an indispensable tool for adaptation of *Sharī'ah* to new (European) contexts.

³⁹ Malcolm Hooper Kerr, *Islamic reform: The political and legal theories of Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Rida*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1966.

⁴⁰ Rūhallāh Khumaynī, *Islam and Revolution I – Writings and Declarations of Imam Khomeini (1941 – 1980)*, translated and annotated by Amir Halgar, Mizan Press, USA, 1981.

innovation added to it by Maudûdî was the idea of an “Islamic revolution”, as a prerequisite for the establishing of an Islamic state.⁴¹

Despite sharing the same doctrinal roots with the Muslim Brotherhood, the state concept of *Hizb-ut-Tahrir al-Islami* (the organisation of political Islam that emerged from the lap of the Muslim Brotherhood in Palestine, founded by Taqiaddîn-an-Nabhânî in Jerusalem in 1953) differs from that of the Muslim Brotherhood in their retention of the *Caliphate*, as the only viable state form for Muslims. Even though based on the *Shûrâ* principle of delegation, their concept of the state remains strongly rooted in the conviction of god’s sovereignty in all questions of the state, which can be assured only through the strict application of *Shari’ah* within the framework of the *Caliphate*. Their strictly universalistic claim rejects any form of nation-state.⁴² Unlike Maudûdî who regarded social inequality as natural, An-Nabhânî integrated some socialist elements concerning the questions of social justice in his state theory, which makes *Hizb-ut-Tahrir* especially appealing to the subaltern classes.

As already mentioned in regard to Rashid Ridâ, the idea of a modern Islamic state, although universal in its claims, does not necessarily exclude nationalism, as evident in the case of Arab nationalism. In the words of Hamid Enayat there is an intrinsic connection between Arab identity and Islam, which makes Islam a powerful basis for national identity building. Although erected on the secular concept of the state, Arab nationalism never hesitated to endorse Islam as the ultimate legitimation of statehood.⁴³ Although non-Arab Muslims lacked this direct identification with Islam as religion revealed to them in their language, the nationalist notion of community as based on common cultural and religious identity could nevertheless offer a powerful tool for nation building.

As for Ridâ some basic questions about the nature of Islamic democracy have been central for the twentieth-century Islamic political theory of the Muslim Brotherhood. The relatively new focus on human rights and Islamic relations to liberal democracy in the contemporary state theory of the global MB is however the part of the general global trend that evolved from US anti-communist strategies during the cold war, in which the discourse on human rights and democracy was generated as a central ideological tool intended to confront and offer a substitute for the communist ideas of equality and social justice. Its unprecedented influence in the form of the post-cold war “democratisation discourse”, has had an enormous impact on state-theoretical thinking on a global scale. This “democratic turn” did not bypass Islamic state theory either.

The “democratic turn” is largely salient in the writings of Rashid al-Gannûshî. Whereas scholars like Maudûdî and even Ridâ theorised about “Islamic democracy” as genuinely different from the concept of “Western”⁴⁴ democracy, Rashid al-Gannûshî is the first Islamic state theorist who adopted the stance that liberal democracy is (selectively) compatible with Islam. In the view of Azzam Tamimi, spokesman of the Muslim Association of Britain and director of the Institute of Islamic Political Thought, Gannûshî sets the focus on procedural structures of liberal democracy, challenging the traditional Islamic integralist idea of democracy as an ideology competing with that of Islam, by putting the emphasis on electoral procedures and institutional arrangements instead of on the theoretical questions of sovereignty and balance of power.⁴⁵ A similar tendency is to be observed in the theoretical writings of Hasan al-Turabi, influential intellectual of the Sudanese Muslim Brotherhood and one of the founding fathers of the Sudanese Islamic state in the early nineties.⁴⁶

In these terms Gannûshî strikes an accord with the very core of the Schumpeterian concept of “narrow democracy”⁴⁷, which has been further developed by Robert Dahl⁴⁸ as a concept that fits the

⁴¹ Sayyid Abu’l A’lâ Maudûdî, *The Process of Islamic Revolution*, Islamic Publications, Lahore, 1967.

⁴² Taqiuddin An-Nabhani, *The Islamic State*, Al-Khilafah Publications, London, 1995.

⁴³ Enayat, 1982, p. 114.

⁴⁴ Maudûdî refers explicitly to “Western democracy” without explaining which precise form of “Western” democracy he has in mind.

⁴⁵ Azzam S. Tamimi, *Rashid Gannoushi: A Democrat Within Islamism*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2001.

⁴⁶ See: Hamza Ates, ‘Towards a Distinctive Model? Reconciling the Views of Contemporary Muslim Thinkers on an Ideal State for Muslim Societies’ *Religion, State and Society*, Vol. 31, No. 4, 2003. pp. 347 – 366.

⁴⁷ Joseph A. Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, Harper Perennial Modern Thought, New York, 2008.

neoliberal free-market ideology, which evolved to be the dominant concept of liberal democracy from the eighties onwards. At the same time it reflects the global tendency towards the transformation of the state in a post-Keynesian direction; the state being increasingly reduced to the formal administration of a neoliberal political economy.

One of the most influential contemporary thinkers of the global Muslim Brotherhood, Yûsuf al-Qaradâwî retains nevertheless a somewhat peculiar understanding of what he calls democracy as the logic in which, "*the right of the majority should be given precedence over that of the minority.*"⁴⁹ He claims so in the context of refuting criticism of the question of equal political rights, which he sees coming from the side of secularists, whom he accuses of not having "*loyalty to either Islam or Christianity.*"⁵⁰ By the same token he puts forward a very particular understanding of freedom: "*For those people (secularists) forget, or ignore, a more serious and more significant point: that abandoning Islamic laws and Islamic solutions for the sake of non Muslims, who are a minority, runs against the principle of freedom for Muslims, who are a majority, to do as their religion orders them.*"⁵¹

In the light of recent events in Egypt, a shift in focus towards liberal individual rights and the discourse on democracy, can be observed in the Egyptian branch of the MB. The newly elected supreme guide, Mohamed Badei, reiterates the dedication of the Brotherhood to a gradual reform, underlining that "*the Brotherhood believes that a regime that honours personal freedoms, espouses democracy, and seeks legitimacy from the nation via general elections is the closest to Islam.*"⁵² The focus on personal freedoms and democracy is accompanied with the discourse on pluralism, which re-opens the debate on one of the most controversial issues in the debate on Islamic democracy and which consists in the question of equal political rights for all. In the context of the events in Egypt Badei states that: "*The Brotherhood believes in citizenship and nationhood and full equality in both rights and obligations for Muslims and Christians*"⁵³, which marks a distance and difference to the dominant position on Islamic democracy as defined by Rashid al-Gannûshî, which until now has not been directly challenged from within.

The Muslim Brotherhood and the concept of civil society forged in Europe

In the absence of a realistic Muslim majority, which is necessary for reforms towards any form of Islamic state, it can be said that in Europe there is only society for the Muslim Brotherhood to build upon. This circumstance was one of the most crucial for the present shape of the MB's political aims, strategies and state and society concepts for Europe. The minority status of Muslims within states and societies of non-Muslims was not foreseen by the traditional *Sharia* and it posed a new challenge to which the Muslim Brotherhood scholars had to respond. The reaction of the Muslim Brotherhood to this challenge was to elaborate new concepts in regard to the relation between Muslim minorities and majority societies, communities and states, to develop strategies of inter-communal activities and finally to establish institutional bodies of representation and expression of their political agenda.

In doing so they reiterated and perpetuated the conceptual imaginary difference between the state and civil society whose liberal revival in Europe began in the eighties and which was observed in the early phases of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt in which a dichotomy between the society of believers (*Umma*) came to be opposed to the nation-state based on secular principles.

In the words of Tarek Oubrou, one of the leading intellectuals of the Union des Organisations Islamiques de France (UOIF), speaking of the Muslim Brotherhood:

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⁴⁸ Robert Dahl, *On Democracy*, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1998.

⁴⁹ Al Qaradawi, 2000, p. 94.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Gamal Essam El-Din, *MB's coming task* at the official website of MB:

<http://www.ikhwanweb.com/article.php?id=22750&ref=search.php> (accessed April, 7. 2011)

⁵³ Ibid.

It is in effect a school of thought born in the Muslim world, in reality that does not correspond to that of secularised society, like the one we live in. We have shaped our own reading of the relationship between Islam and society.⁵⁴

With not even a potential majority to build the state based in *Sharia* and also (as yet) no state authority to enforce it, the observance of the *Sharia* has become a strictly private matter. This circumstance enhanced the conceptual division between state and society in the intellectual universe of the MB and underlined another division, which hitherto belonged to the vocabulary of liberal social theory, the division between public and private. In these circumstances the MB in Europe, committed to *Ijtihad*, dedicated themselves to the task of building a minority *Sharia*, which was supposed to meet the new demands of Muslims living in *Dar al-Dawa*.

In March 1997 the global MB network FIOE created the Council for Fatwa and Research in Dublin, with Sheik Yûsuf al-Qaradâwî at its head with a goal of “issuing collective fatwas which meet the needs of Muslims in Europe, solve their problems and regulate their interaction with the European communities, all within the regulations and objectives of *Shari’a*”.⁵⁵ The council counts 33 members in which, besides al-Qaradâwî, some key figures of the global MB movement are to be found, such as Ahmed al-Rawi, former FIOE president, now president of the Muslim Association of Britain (MAB), the controversial Sheikh Faysal Mawlawi, the deputy head of the organisation, known for his overt support for suicide-bombing missions, as well as the globally active intellectual Rashid al-Gannûshi or Bosnian *Reis-ul-Ulema* Mustafa Ceric.

Al-Qaeadawi, referred to as a “Great Scientist” at the official web site of FIOE, and Mawlawi were also involved in the creation of the European Institute of Human Sciences in Paris (IESH) 1992 at the initiative of Union de Organisations Islamique de Europe (UOIE) and FIOE.

The personal diversity of the scholars involved in this project reveals once again the practical impossibility of a strict division between the European and the global movement of the MB. The agendas posed by these scholars are both global and local and very often both at the same time.

One of the best examples of this combination of global and local agendas that concern Muslims living in the “West”, as much as all others, is Yûsuf al-Qaradâwîs pamphlet, *Priorities of the Islamic Movement in the Coming Phase*.

By Islamic movement Qaradâwî understands “organized, collective work, undertaken by the people, to restore Islam to the leadership of society, and to the helm of life in all walks of life”.⁵⁶ In these terms the duties of the believer at the global level are, according to his view, among others to contribute to the duties of enforcing the *Sharia*, to fight those he considers to be enemies of Allah, to engage in liberating what he considers to be Muslim territories from non-Muslim control, as well as to work on the re-installation of the Islamic *Caliphate*.⁵⁷

The duty of “liberation of Muslim lands from infidels” is reiterated when it comes to the duties at the local level of what he calls Muslim countries.⁵⁸

Finally at the level of Muslim communities living in the “West”, the “*Islamic Movement should play the role of the missing leadership of the Muslim Nation with all its trends and groups*”⁵⁹ as well as to re-present the Muslim community towards the outside world.

This presence favours three goals: first, influencing “Western” stakeholders and public opinion leaders in favour of, as he calls it, the Islamist agenda at a global level, starting from Sudan, Palestine, Kashmir or the Philippines to local levels and causes like the persecution of Salman Rushdie for treason in the UK or the question of the *Hijab* in France; second, to proselytize among non-

⁵⁴ Tarek Oubrou, *Qu’est-ce que l’UOIF?*, Éditions l’Archipel, Paris, 2006. pp. 19.

⁵⁵ <http://www.e-cfr.org/en/ECFR.pdf> (accessed March 3, 2010.)

⁵⁶ Al-Qaradawi, 2000, p. 5.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Al-Qaradawi, 2000, p. 70.

⁵⁹ Al-Qaradawi, 2000, p. 86.

Muslims, the practice that he *vice versa* rejects with ferocious vehemence; and, finally, to enhance the building of a global network of activists.

Qaradâwî is especially worried that the Muslim community in Europe could become assimilated into the majority society, and also that it might embrace the values he sees as genuinely “Western” that he regards as ultimately outrageous, like materialism, secularism and atheism. This view exposes an implicit idea that Muslims in Europe (and generally) are defined primarily by religious identity; the position, which is shared by some post-modernist European scholars, notably multiculturalists, whereby the emphasis of the latter is set rather on “culture”, which derives more or less directly from religion. This view encounters strong criticism by some secular Muslim intellectuals.⁶⁰

Qaradâwî favours dialogue with the majority society, but retains at the same time a strong line of identity based division:

I used to tell our brothers in foreign countries, Try to have your small society within the larger society, otherwise you will melt in it like salt in water. What has preserved the Jewish character over the past centuries was their small community that was unique in its ideas and rituals and was known as "the Jewish ghetto". Try to have your own "Muslim ghetto then".⁶¹

The idea about the homogenous, identity based community has one important strategic advantage which favours one of the central priorities of the Brotherhood set for the European context: to gradually evolve to be the officially recognised representative of the entire Muslim community in Europe in relation to majority society as well as to be accredited as a legitimate interlocutor in regard to community affairs in relation to the state.

This endeavour finds an open door in many European countries mainly for two reasons: European political cycles favour representations which provide them with one interlocutor for, what they want to see as, one community, instead of many, and they prefer organisational structures reminiscent to their own, which the MB is able to provide through its supranational organisations, like the FIOE. The second reason is the increased awareness of European political elites of the need to find an appropriate model of political accommodation of religious diversity in Europe, the task for which the well-organised Brotherhood is the first choice when it comes to communitarian political representation.

The scholarly debate about the political accommodation of religious diversity in European (still) more or less secular states has evolved to be very fruitful and diversified in the last ten years. It ranges from, among others, multiculturalism, trans-culturalism and communitarianism, to individual choice and multilevel governance of diversity.

In this regard the European MB seems to be strongly in favour of the multicultural model of political representation. This model is based in a claim that integration and more broadly political accommodation of minorities should be grounded in recognition of the “cultural” distinction of different ethnic and religious identities.

In the year 2000 FIOE issued the Charter of Muslims in Europe with the aim of “setting out the general principles for better understanding of Islam, and the bases for the integration of Muslims in society, in the context of citizenship”⁶². Multiculturalism and pluralism are set as ubiquitous terms: “Muslims of Europe emphasise their respect for pluralism and the religious and philosophical diversity of the multicultural societies they live in. They believe that Islam affirms the diversity and differences that exist between people and is not discomfited by this multicultural reality.”⁶³

⁶⁰ Aziz Al-Azmeh, ‘Postmodern Obscurantism and “Muslim Question”’ in *Fighting Identities – Race, Religion and Ethno-Nationalism*, eds. Leo Panitch and Colin Leys, Socialist Register 2003, Merlin Press, London, 2003, pp. 28-51

⁶¹ Al-Qaradawi, 2000, p. 90.

⁶² http://www.euro-muslim.com/En_u_Foundation_Details.aspx?News_ID=323 (accessed 21.May.2011.)

⁶³ Ibid.

The endeavour to blur the conceptual difference between multiculturalism as a normative political concept and pluralism as concrete social reality is one of the fundamental discursive elements of MB political language in Europe. Under this token Tariq Ramadan too declares multicultural society as ubiquitous to “cultural” diversity within the society:

A point should be noted: multicultural society is a fact; there is no being for or against it. The basic truth must be highlighted before engaging in the debate over “multiculturalism”, “integration” or “citizenship”. Whether we want it or not, our Western societies, in the United States or Europe, Canada or Australia, are culturally diverse, as South American, African, and Asian societies have long been (and even Eastern Europe, so often overlooked when speaking of Europe).⁶⁴

There are two reasons for the broad approval of multiculturalism by the European MB: multicultural governance generates the model of community or group (not individual) based representation, which favours the position of the MB as mediator and interlocutor between the community and the state, which conversely additionally empowers their organisations in relation to the Muslim community they seek to re-present. Second, this model operates on an identity-difference dichotomy, which strives to preserve the “cultural” and religious differences as such within the society.

The first European country to adopt multicultural policies was Great Britain. Gilles Kepel argues that post-modern multicultural policies mirror the communalist model, introduced for the first time in colonial British India. According to him this model was “*promoted by political leaders who wished to attain power by presenting themselves as the exclusive representatives of a `community reduced to a single will, by unifying heterogeneous populations on the basis of sociological definition of their `Muslimness`*”.⁶⁵ It is arguable whether the communitarian model was promoted by local leaders or rather by the colonial administration, it remains however a fact that this model, also reminiscent of the imperialist policies of Tsarist Russia in dealing with religious and ethnic minorities via ethnic notables, immensely empowered those at the point of intersection within the local communities.

After the secularist model of the state/society arrangement began to face criticism in the nineties, the multicultural model entered the scene as its more proper substitute. At the beginning it was widely embraced as a genuine pluralist model of political representation within multi-religious and multiethnic societies, by a political spectrum ranging from liberal and leftist post-modern and post secularist positions to neo-liberal and political Islamist positions, but it soon began to earn harsh criticism from different sides, and notably harsh was the voice of the Nobel laureate Amrtya Sen: “*Why should the British citizen who happens to be a Muslim have to rely on clerics and other leaders of the religious community to communicate with the prime minister?*”⁶⁶

Another, recent blow to multicultural policies came from the ex-militant of *Hizb-ut-Tahrir*, Ed Husein, who regards his early years of radicalisation as a direct effect of the social neglect of British society in regard to Muslim youth in Britain, raised on the identity policies of representation as derived from multicultural communitarianism.⁶⁷

Amrtya Sen and Ed Husain were not the only ones to criticise multiculturalism and identity politics as its conceptual basis. Kenan Malik, the British leftist intellectual of Pakistani origin, noted that multiculturalism came as concomitant to an extreme shift in the conceptual understanding of racism, which occurred over the last twenty years. This new intellectual current endeavoured to divorce the concept of racism with its hitherto strong roots in particularism and set it instead directly in the concept of universalism.

⁶⁴ Tariq Ramadan, *What I Believe*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2010, p. 13.

⁶⁵ Gilles Kepel, *Allah in the West: Islamic Movements in America and Europe*, Stanford University Press, Palo Alto, 1997, p. 94.

⁶⁶ Amrtya Sen, *Identity and Violence - The Illusion of Destiny*, Norton, New York, 2006, p. 78.

⁶⁷ Ed Husain, *The Islamist*, Penguin, London, 2007.

Radicals (leftists) slowly lost faith in secular universalism and began talking instead about multiculturalism and group rights. They became disenchanted with Enlightenment ideas of rationalism and humanism, and many began to decry the Enlightenment as a 'Eurocentric' project. Where once the left had argued that everyone should be treated equally despite their racial, ethnic, religious or cultural differences, now it pushed the idea that different people should be treated differently *because* of such difference.⁶⁸

The conceptual critic however didn't remain solely the domain of leftists. The liberal critic of multiculturalism at the turn of the century tried to redefine and defend the historical assets of liberalism, such as universal citizenship and neutrality of the state, which came under attack in the nineties.⁶⁹

Nevertheless, those who see multiculturalism coming to a definitive end as a model of political accommodation of religious diversity in the middle of the first decade of the twentyfirst century, may have been celebrating too early. The rejection of multiculturalism is still far from being widespread among scholars. One of the most prominent advocates of this declining concept, British Muslim sociologist and Director of the University Research Centre for the Study of Ethnicity and Citizenship in Bristol, Tariq Madood, retains the appropriateness of the concept for twentyfirst century political regulation of diversity underlining thereby, in a similar vein to Tariq Ramadan, the almost ubiquitous meaning of multiculturalism and pluralist religious society.

Contrary to all those who think that the time to speak of multiculturalism is over, I think it most timely and necessary, and that we need more not less. Multiculturalism is indeed a prime candidate for 'Themes of the Twenty-First Century'...For multiculturalism is a form of Integration. It is the form of integration that best meets the normative implications of equal citizenship and under our present post -9/11, post -7/ circumstances stands the best chance for succeeding.⁷⁰ So it may be crisis but it should be clear that the multiculturalism that I speak of is not just a remote or utopian ideal but something that exists as a policy idea qualifying citizenship and informing actual policies as well as relations in civil society.⁷¹

Along with many other partisans of multiculturalism, Madood builds the argument in favour of multiculturalism alongside the failure of the liberal state to provide the mechanisms of stability for an increasingly ethnically and religiously diversified society. On the other hand the liberal critics of multiculturalism keep reminding that, "*historically the liberal, difference-blind state with its universal citizenship, which is now found fault with, has exactly emerged as a peacemaker to a hyper-diverse society torn by religious wars in seventeenth-century Europe.*"⁷² Nevertheless "*no convincing explanation has as yet been offered why this solution, which Barry calls the 'strategy of privatisation' no longer works.*"⁷³

In this regard I believe that the liberal strategies of privatisation of religion have come under attack as a normative solution in the last two decades as the effect of a radical theoretical shift, which occurred during the eighties. Brought to the point I would argue that *the de-privatisation of religion occurred concomitantly with increasing privatisation of public life* as the effect of neoliberal structural change.

This shift, which occurred with the so-called "cultural turn" in the early eighties, which was at the same time a shift from interest based politics to identity based politics, has in my opinion deeper

⁶⁸ Kenan Malik, *From Fatwa to Jihad - The Rushdie Affair and its Legacy*, Atlantic Books, London, 2009, p. xi

⁶⁹ See: Brian Berry, *Culture and Equality*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 2001., Jacob Levy, *The Multiculturalism of Fear*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2000. and Giovanni Sartori *Pluralismo, multiculturalismo e estranei*, Rizzoli, Milano, 2000.

⁷⁰ Tariq Madood, *Multiculturalism: A Civic Idea*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 2007. p. 14.

⁷¹ Madood, 2007, pp. 15/16.

⁷² Christian Joppke, 'The Retreat of Multiculturalism in the Liberal State: Theory and Policy', *British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 55, Issue 2., 2004, p. 239/40.

⁷³ Ibid.

roots in wider range systemic change taking place simultaneously, set by the neo-liberal policies of the Reagan and Thatcher administrations. The focus on identity developed concomitantly with the phenomenon of *strategic de-socialisation of society* which was condensed in Margaret Thatcher's famous slogan "*there is no such thing as a society*", in which the idea of the state has had to be divorced from any idea of social responsibility, which was to become the entirely private matter of individuals, families and solidarity groups. I would even argue that the dominance of identity politics in the contemporary political universe could be seen as an indication of a tendency to radically new political stratification of society in the future, according to the social logic which I would call neo-feudalism, Kenan Malik once again, "*being 'Muslim', unlike being 'poor' or 'disadvantaged', registers in the bureaucratic mind as an authentic identity*"⁷⁴.

For the European MB the politics of multiculturalism still seem to have no alternative in sight. It remains to be seen if the temporary withdrawal from multiculturalist policies in Europe is going to develop into a longer process or not, and, if yes, with which concepts is it going to be gradually substituted. This, and more generally the direction in which the future policies of political interest expression and representation will be driven, will also decide the direction in which the political concepts and strategies of the European MB will develop. And *vice versa*, the direction in which future European policies of political representation are headed depends at a certain level on the political ideas and strategies developed by the European Muslim Brotherhood.

Conclusion

This article emphasises the importance of historical contextualisation of political concepts of state and civil society for the contemporary analysis of state / society relations. From one side it exhorts the danger of an a-historicisation of social phenomena and concomitantly theoretical concepts forged to explain them, and on the other it simultaneously pinpoints the need to understand the interconnectedness of concepts forged in apparently different theoretic and cultural traditions.

Under the same token this study applies the method, which can be called comparative conceptual analysis, that, according to my opinion, addresses the objectives of this study in a most appropriate way. Although exceptional in regard to dominant methods in the social sciences, conceptual analysis allows more rigorous in-depth scrutiny of the complex conceptual apparatus of state and civil society theories than other qualitative methods do. Combined with the comparative method it allows us to identify connections between seemingly different social theories and concepts forged under different historical circumstances.

The concepts of state and civil society as currently being developed by the Muslim Brotherhood in Europe rely strongly on the concept of multiculturalism, which evolved from a promising policy solution for accommodation of ethnic and religious diversity in Europe in the nineties, to a harshly criticised policy failure by the middle of the first decade of the twentyfirst century. However, its end seems to be a protracted one. It remains to be seen what alternative policy solutions will be developed in the years to come.

⁷⁴ Malik, 2009, p. 69.

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