

UDC 32

**The Muslim Brotherhood (terrorist organization banned in Russia)
in Syria's modern political history: political Islam practices****Basem K. Atieh**

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Abstract

The article aims to investigate the trajectories concerning the definition of political Islam and its relation to Syria's political history and current crisis. To this end, one of the most prominent actors of political Islam, the Muslim Brotherhood (terrorist organization banned in Russia), is discussed. That is why the research deals with the Muslim Brotherhood (terrorist organization banned in Russia)'s ideology and creed. The conceptions and notions of the Muslim Brotherhood (terrorist organization banned in Russia) in parallel to the notions of socialist secularism in Syria are examined. Consequently, further examination is applied to the crisis of Syria. The authors of the article scrutinise the case of Syria since the Independence until the present time, demonstrating the internal and external dimensions of power struggle, with providing further notes concerning the prospects of Syria's political future and political Islam. However, looking at the undone crisis of Syria, in which the political frame is still vague and unclear, the article focuses on the issue of political Islam that is presented by the Muslim Brotherhood (terrorist organization banned in Russia). The historical existence of the Muslim Brotherhood (terrorist organization banned in Russia) in Syria, its status and its role in the ongoing conflict are analysed. We shall see if the conceptions and notions of the Muslim Brotherhood (terrorist organization banned in Russia) can be an adequate substitute for the current form of governance in Syria.

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Keywords

Political Islam, Muslim Brotherhood (terrorist organization banned in Russia), political practices, political actors, political participation, Syria.

Introduction

Political Islam has been presented in the Middle East for a long time. It has been in challenge for political power against secular and socialist parties alike. However, the sparks of Arab Spring in Tunisia in early 2011, then in Egypt, Libya, Yemen and Syria, provided a lifetime opportunity for specific Islamic parties to seek their craved political power.

To understand political Islam in the contemporary sense, it is essential to understand the significance of Islam as a religion, which operates – privately and publicly – in a dialectical duality within the base of the Quran and prophetic tradition that is known as *Hadith*. In other words, Islam allegedly underlines balance and fairness in all aspects of an individual and community lives – including social, economic, legal, military, and political spheres.

From an Islamic point of view, there is no separation between religion and politics, with an emphasis on the oneness of God. In other words, Islam is a complete and total way of life, where both entities share the same world. The interrelationship between religion and politics is formally contained within the divine law of Islam, aka *Sharia Law*. In this manner, *Sharia* is considered to be the only official form of authority, unlike the secular and socialist forms of authorities where the separation of religion and state is the norm.

The very notion of “political Islam” has been greatly discussed in Russia and abroad. It remains a controversial concept, multi-million, multilayered, multinational, multi-confessional phenomenon with significant influence not only on the political and social processes in the Muslim world, but also on the entire system of international relations. In political science it is considered both as a theory and practice of a new social upsurge of the Muslim world.

Many Russian scholars tend to treat Islamism and political Islam as synonyms¹. Both are considered to be anti-Western and anti-liberal version of reformism that does not lead to secularization.

For instance, B.V. Dolgov supports the idea that Islam is not only a religion, but also a way of life of the overwhelming majority of Muslims, and to a large extent the basis of their civilisational identity. It largely regulates the sociocultural sphere of society, including relationships between people, behavior in daily practices, family and marriage relations, and also significantly influences social and political life, of which the Islamist movements or political Islam are a part. So Islamism, or political Islam, is

¹ See: Dolgov B.V. Politicheskii islam v sovremennom musul'manskom mire [Political Islam in the modern Muslim world]. Available at: http://www.perspektivy.info/book/politicheskij_islam_v_sovremennom_musulmanskom_mire_2007-10-04.htm; Ignatenko A. A. (2004) Islam i politika [Islam and politics]. Moscow: Institute of Religion and Politics; Landa R.G. (2015) Politicheskii islam i otnosheniya Vostok – Zapad [Political Islam and East – West relations]. Islam v sovremennom mire: vnutrigosudarstvennyi i mezhdunarodno-politicheskii aspekty [Islam in the modern world: intrastate and international political aspects], 11 (1), pp. 119-213; Malashenko A.V. (1997) Nepriyatie fundamentalizma kak ego zerkal'noe otrazhenie [Rejection of fundamentalism as its mirror image]. NG-Religii [Independent newspaper – Religions], 25th Dec.; Polyakov K.I. (2003) Arabskii Vostok i Rossiya: problema islamskogo fundamentalizma [The Arab East and Russia: the problem of Islamic fundamentalism]. Moscow: Editorial URSS Publ.; Semedov S.A. (2009) Islam v politike: ideologiya i praktika [Islam in politics: ideology and practice]. Moscow: Ekon-Inform Publ. Available at: http://hsimm.ranepa.ru/files/2017/11/hsimm_Semedov-S.A.-Islam-v-politike.pdf; Vertyaev K.V. (2011) Politicheskii islam v kontekste formirovaniya politicheskoi oppozitsii v sovremennoi Turtsii [Political Islam in the context of the formation of political opposition in modern Turkey]. Islam na Blizhnem i Srednem Vostoke [Islam in the Middle East], 6, pp. 212-220; Vidyasova M. F., Orlov V. V. (2008) Politicheskii islam v stranakh Severnoi Afriki. Istoriya i sovremennoe sostoyanie [Political Islam in North African countries. The history and the current state]. Moscow: Moscow University.

more of a political phenomenon that reflects the desire of a certain part of Muslim society to preserve its identity in the context of globalisation [Dolgov, www].

Moreover, A.A. Ignatenko underlines that political Islam “is the implementation of the project to create political conditions for the application of Islamic (Sharia) norms in all spheres of human life” [Ignatenko, 2004, 40]. However, according to S.A. Semedov, Islamism is a “revolutionary” ideology. The Islamists try actively to change the reality to bring it closer to true Islamic principles, but they do not realise that they in fact distort Islam. They change dogma not in order to legitimize regimes and not in order to adapt to the people's religiosity, but in order to find in Islam a justification to struggle against the existing political order [Semedov, 2009, www].

Another Russian scholar V.V. Naumkin distinguishes the notions of Islamism and political Islam emphasising the scriptural foundations of Islamism which “is committed to the idea of introducing *Sharia* as a law that determines the life of modern Islamic societies” [Naumkin, 2006, 6].

Russian scholars repeatedly point out the unity of these notions. In this sense Sharia supplies Muslims with Islamic political and legal guidance, based on the Quran and prophetic tradition. Sharia directs all and everything from worship rules, diet system, sex, marriage relations, finance, forms of punishment, principles of warfare, etc. Moreover, Islamic political order should be based on five universal goals presented in the protection of life, religion, property, honor and dignity, and sanity of reason. So the purpose of Islamic order is to ensure the safety of people; legality and normal moral climate in society; creation of a competitive economy that provides a decent standard of living for citizens; free and high-quality health care and education; eradication of illiteracy; protection of all types of legal property, eradication of corruption, clannishness and nepotism; support and development of science and culture, etc. [Mukhametov, 2011]. In order to achieve such goals, an Islamic state must be created and Islamic political parties and organisations should work.

Ideological connotation of political Islam represents a set of certain concepts that can be used arbitrarily to construct a specific ideological position which interprets and disseminates Islamic doctrine in its own spirit. Forms and methods of realizing political ideals range from underground organisations to legal parties. A.A. Ermekbaev ascertains that Political Islam is an Islamic movement that expresses interests of various social groups in the Muslim world. It is a whole network of legal (and semi-legal) parties, factions, public organisations, cultural associations, circles and secret societies, often linked together, and which affect not only adherents of Islam, but also the whole modern world. The link, which is highly significant, is the coherent flirtation between moderate Islamism and radical Islamism. Through legal political institutions, the first one seeks to transform the political system and occupy a stable place within via the actions of the second [Ermekbaev, 2012].

Ideologists of Islam stand for the preservation of “Islamic values” as an indispensable condition for further development. They see their strategic goal in building the “Islamic state” based on the “eternal and fair” laws of the Quran, where “Islamic social justice”, based on Sharia law, will prevail (Quran Surat al-Nisah 4: 135). In addition, political Islam is said to be a union of theology and politics (theory and practice). Politics for Islamists is a completely sacred phenomenon. Islamists try to fill religious concepts with political meaning (and political ones with religious ones), e. g. “Jihad equals war” and “war equals Jihad”. Despite the fact that political practice is secondary to the theology the forms of this practice make it necessary to change theology.

Some foreign scholars also refer to Islamism or political Islam as a political theory and practice that “have as their goal the establishment of an Islamic political order in the sense of a state whose governmental principles, institutions and legal system derive directly from the Sharia” [Mandaville, 2007, 57].

Besides the very phenomenon of political Islam, the latter should be examined in the broadest sense possible in terms of the range of modern political movements, ideological trends, and state-directed policies concerned with granting or depriving Islamists an authoritative status in political life [March, 2015].

Teasing out the nature of political Islam, some scholars might claim that it is the actual creation of an Islamic State based on Islamic law. Others might simply disagree. J.L. Esposito, one of the leading American experts on Islam, argues that political Islam is based on the premise that the foundational textual sources of Islam should dominate society and politics together – hence political Islam is a solo representative of the interaction between religion and politics in any given society [Esposito, Oxford history..., 1999, 45-50]. So, the term of political Islam means that religion is inseparable from politics, which is reflected in the concept of an Islamic state.

N.N. Ayubi, political scientist and Middle East scholar, projects a vision of political Islam indicating the aim of social and political movements which seek to implement Islam in the public as well as the private spheres, the very issue that raises a legitimate concern whether the *Sharia* of political Islam is to be applied on non-Muslims [Ayubi, 1991, 24-81]. However, Islamic socio-political initiatives and organizations advocate the use of pragmatism to enforce and implement *Sharia* via the branches of political Islam, which are embodied and presented in several parties, movements and organisations around the world, whereas one of the most prominent is the society of the Muslim Brotherhood (terrorist organization banned in Russia) [Esposito, The Islamic threat..., 1999, 68-73].

The history of political Islam in its modern form begins precisely with the establishment in 1928 in Egypt of the “Muslim Brotherhood (terrorist organization banned in Russia)” association, which continues to be an active political force to date. In the coming discussion, we shall look at the case of the Muslim Brotherhood (terrorist organization banned in Russia); how members of the very movement have been engaged in political practices in the Arab countries in general, and in Syria in particular.

The Muslim Brotherhood (terrorist organization banned in Russia) and the rise of political Islam

Since the invasion of Persia and the downfall of the last pharaoh, to the famous coup d'etat in 1952, Egypt underwent a long period of colonisation, just as most of the Arab states. Egypt, once the land of Pharaohs, has been one of the most influential Islamic nation-states in the world comprising a Muslim population exceeding 70 million, with an exclusion of *Sharia* from its constitution, laws and regulations. That was during the colonial period, but, the fallout from protracted colonisation and subsequent decolonisation of Egypt triggered an extensive Islamic reform movement shaping what is known today as political Islam. Since then, indigenous social and political movements originated, revolving around detaching the Muslim population from the colonial rule, restoring Islamic thought and implementing the *Sharia* as a state's law.

One of the most influential of such social movements advocating religious and political reform has been the Muslim Brotherhood (terrorist organization banned in Russia), known in Arabic as “al-Ikhwan”. The movement originated in Egypt in 1928 by Hasan al-Banna. It became popular rapidly due to its appeal to Islam as a complete system that offered an alternative to the westernisation and secularisation that then threatened Muslim societies. To counter these negative influences, al-Banna advocated a return to the roots of religion [Milton-Edwards, 2011, 129]. Al-Banna's principal aim, so as the Muslim Brotherhood (terrorist organization banned in Russia)'s, was initially not political but religious. In order to spread the faith, the organisation formed a large network of religious, welfare and educational institutions and facilities. It became a classless, populist movement that drew members

from all strata of society, although its core membership was the urban middle class. The movement's ideas circulated beyond Egypt and led to the formation of its branches in countries such as Jordan, Syria and Palestine [Shadid, 1988].

Albeit, internal cohesion has been an important feature of the Muslim Brotherhood (terrorist organization banned in Russia) movement, which enhanced and increased the level of radicalization during the times of successive political systems, the assassination of al-Banna and imprisonment of its members, in addition to the spread of socialist political parties.

Sayyid Qutb, best known as “the father of radical Islam” and “Godfather of Qaeda”, according to Lawrence Wright in his book *The Looming Tower*, has become a leading and influential figure of the Muslim Brotherhood (terrorist organization banned in Russia). He introduced the distinction between a “decadent or ignorant order” and Islamic order, arguing that ending the former and promoting the latter was only possible through a “holy war” (*jihad*). Whilst H. al-Banna had argued for a gradual change within society, reforming and ultimately purifying society through educating the public (an evolutionary approach), Qutb advanced a more revolutionary approach aimed at overthrowing secular governments in order to revitalise the force of Islam and establish an Islamic state (a revolutionary approach) [Milton-Edwards, 2011, 131].

By the end of the 1960s, political developments in the Middle East – military defeats, economic decline and social unrest – set the stage for an Islamic revival that was based on the Qutbian politicisation of religion, now commonly referred to as political Islam [Knudsen, www]. Qutb's radical concepts of Islamisation of state and constitution created a threat to the Egyptian secular rule, thus Qutb was sentenced and then died in 1966.

However, what is known as the official base of radical faction of the Muslim Brotherhood (terrorist organization banned in Russia) has been the slogan of “Allah is our objective. The Prophet is our leader. Quran is our law. Jihad is our way. Death in the way of Allah is our highest hope” [El-Awaisi, 2000]. This slogan has been the code principle for faith and actions of the Muslim Brotherhood (terrorist organization banned in Russia). As a result of this creed in application, members and groups from the society of the Muslim Brotherhood (terrorist organization banned in Russia) have been advocated for acts of hatred and discrimination due to violent actions – as in several cases – in promoting Islamism, the very issue that is prohibited by secular constitutions, like the Syrian one.

For example, according to Syrian Constitution 2012, Article 8, No. 1, it is stated that “the political system of the state shall be based on the principle of political pluralism, and exercising power democratically through the ballot box” in addition to No. 4 from the same Article 8 indicating that “carrying out any political activity or forming any political parties or groupings on the basis of religious, sectarian, tribal, regional, class-based, professional, or on discrimination based on gender, origin, race or colour may not be undertaken”.

The society of the Muslim Brotherhood (terrorist organization banned in Russia), with the support of foreign powers, continues to be the most influential, effective, and powerful Islamic religious and political movement in the world today. Nevertheless, the organisation has undergone “normalisation and modernisation” processes to conceal the peculiarities of radicalisation in order to be more accepted as “moderate Islamists”, participating in election campaigns, exposing candidates for political seats and positions.

The case of Syria

The modern history of the Muslim Brotherhood (terrorist organization banned in Russia) in Syria is almost the same as in Egypt. In the mid-1940s, Syria was the first country, after Egypt, where al-

Ikhwan became the local branch of the Muslim Brotherhood (terrorist organization banned in Russia). It was led by the Ikhwan's leader Mustafa al-Sibai who managed to arm the Movement in 1942 throughout Syria. The Syrian Ikhwan aimed to obtain more political power and seats within the Syrian secular establishment. It was allegedly claimed that during the unstable period of French mandate departure in 1946 and the socialist Bath coup in March 1963, some members connected with the Muslim Brotherhood (terrorist organization banned in Russia) movement in Syria seized the opportunity of political unrest and had representation in the Parliament from three seats (amounting to 2.6%) in 1949 to ten (5.7%) in 1961 [Zisser, *Faces of Syria...*, 2003, 253].

Due to the political unrest, social chaos and the multiplicity of coups and governments, members of the Muslim Brotherhood (terrorist organization banned in Russia) movement found for themselves an economic-political base. However, that did not last long due to the famous coup in 1961 that led to the end of unity between Syria and Egypt, as the Syrian Bath Party took full control over Syria in 1963. At that time, political challenges erupted between the socialist and secular Baathists and members of the Muslim Brotherhood (terrorist organization banned in Russia) in which the latter took arms to overcome their economic-political marginalisation by the secular, socialist, and non-religious movements and political parties in Syria [Teitelbaum, 2011].

The leadership and members of the Muslim Brotherhood (terrorist organization banned in Russia) claimed that the Syrian government was promoting heresy, as they criticised the economic policies of the socialist government, which had already expanded its social base.

The Bath government was demonised and allegedly pictured as the "an enemy of Islam", as the Muslim Brotherhood (terrorist organization banned in Russia) militias called for violent acts against the Syrian government and citizens in an attempt to put pressure on the social level, overthrow the government and re-gain power. As a result, the movement of the Muslim Brotherhood (terrorist organization banned in Russia) has been advocated for acts of political violence and radicalism, therefore scores of its members and followers have been countered, imprisoned or exiled. So, the movement of the Muslim Brotherhood (terrorist organization banned in Russia) has been prohibited and military confronted for attempting to enforce Islamic laws in constitution and state, taking arms against Syrian state, state officials, citizens, vandalising public institutions and committing atrocities against citizens of Syria on the basis of religion, sect, faith and political stances [Abedin, *www*].

However, when Hafiz al-Assad took power in November 1970, he attempted to modify the anti-Islamic policies of his predecessors. The attempt was motivated by Assad's desire to reduce sectarianism and secure all the religious communities in Syria. Yet, that did not work and the confrontation continued, reaching one of its climaxes with the eruption of Islamists' riots in 1973 in reaction to Assad's plans to modify the clause in the Syrian constitution stating that Islam *is one of the sources* of jurisprudence [Zisser, *Syria's façade...*, 2003, 248-249].

The conflict escalated between 1979 and 1982. Members of the Brotherhood movement, at that time, accelerated its violent activity. They sought to organise sabotages, strikes, local rebellions and to assassinate political, military, public figures and citizens in Syria. They launched armed assaults against the military barracks in Aleppo, Palmira and Homs, resulted in what is called as massacres of Syria, according to Tishreen Newspaper, issued in Syria on 1st December 1981. They booby-trapped transportations, caused explosions in civilian areas, killed people who were not supportive to them, regardless religion and sect.

Violent clashes continued almost on daily basis and reached a climax in February 1982 culminating in the military entanglement in Hama between the Syrian Armed Forces and the Muslim Brotherhood (terrorist organization banned in Russia) militias. The military punitive campaign against the latter

resulted in the complete defeat of the Muslim Brotherhood (terrorist organization banned in Russia) movement, politically and military speaking. The lawmakers of the Syrian Parliament, known as the People's Council, endorsed a law that convicted any person who was found connected or related to the society of Muslim Brotherhood (terrorist organization banned in Russia). Therefore, the Muslim Brotherhood (terrorist organization banned in Russia) in Syria had been outlawed and uprooted after February 1982. Since then, the movement of the Muslim Brotherhood (terrorist organization banned in Russia) had no foothold in Syria, but it has been gaining power in exile, especially in London, Brussels and Turkey remaining the largest Islamist movement overseas. However, according to some scholars, the failure of the Muslim Brotherhood (terrorist organization banned in Russia) in Syria was based on its inability to materialise a strong societal support, while socialism and secularism have been prioritised among Syrian people [Hinnebusch, www].

Bashar al-Assad, the new, young and modern president of Syria, promised reforms, on all levels, just after coming to the power in summer 2000 after the death of his father Hafez al-Assad, whose presidential terms were characterised by secular socialism. The reforms of Bashar al-Assad in 2000 sparked the flames for Damascus Spring with its open climate of debates and discussions on political, social and economic topics. It had started with the “Communiqué of the 99 Intellectuals”, and then with the “Manifesto of the Thousand”. These were petitions signed by prominent intellectuals and Syria’s intelligentsia demanding “political and intellectual pluralism” under the “rule of law”, urging for a multiparty democracy and the lifting of the 1963 State of Emergency. However, the reforms of Bashar al-Assad in 2000, during the period of Damascus Spring, were characterised by the release of political prisoners, opposition figures and prisoners of conscience. Exiled political figures were allowed to return to Syria, as individuals, not as members of movements or political bodies and parties.

The liberal climate of Bashar al-Assad’s produced a new political atmosphere giving people the platforms to speak out, such as in political salons, cultural centres and public seminars. A central theme published in numerous statements of those times was the pursuit of peace based on democracy. However, in May 2001, the Muslim Brotherhood (terrorist organization banned in Russia), and due to this openness granted by the Syrian government, declared their “National Honour Pact for Political Work” revealing a detour in their political methods towards “democracy”. The Pact called to create a “modern state, based on separation of powers and the independence of authorities at all levels of society”. In any case, it was mentioned that the “modern form of state is one of the things offered by Islamic *Sharia* to human civilisation” [Ziadeh, www].

Members of the Muslim Brotherhood (terrorist organization banned in Russia) movement claimed that a new pluralistic state should represent the peaceful transfer of power by means of free elections and delegation of major roles in the defence of democracy to civil society and even opposition groups. In the Pact, the members of the Muslim Brotherhood (terrorist organization banned in Russia) stated their dedication to dialogue and “democratic political framework”.

Furthermore, they designated prominent features of democracy – human rights, no discrimination among citizens, in addition to equality between men and women. They stated that Syria needed “a peaceful changeover of power”. Yet, the pact didn’t mention clearly what would be the role of Islam and Islamism in their “newly made” political methods.

All the attempts made by the Muslim Brotherhood (terrorist organization banned in Russia) to change their dogma from a radical one to a modern one failed to assure the Syrian government and Syrian people of their sincerity. The Syrian government, Parliament and people did not accept the coming back of the Muslim Brotherhood (terrorist organization banned in Russia) and forbade any

affiliation with them in Syria. Therefore, three years later, in 2004 the movement published its political programme “The Political Project for the Future Syria”.

Moreover, the next time the Muslim Brotherhood (terrorist organization banned in Russia) appeared in the political horizon when along with other opposition groups and political figures signed the *Damascus Declaration* on Democratic Transition issued on 1 November 2005. The *Declaration* was followed by a series of policy papers and statements produced mostly by the Muslim Brotherhood (terrorist organization banned in Russia) in which they called for “peaceful and gradual reform founded and based on dialogue and recognition of the other” [إعلان دمشق, www].

Signing the declaration occurred on 16 October 2005, in a failed attempt to unify the divided Syrian oppositions that are supported and funded overseas by different states and intelligence services. Therefore, the Muslim Brotherhood (terrorist organization banned in Russia) retreated from the *Declaration* and the “Unity Statement” that was issued in 2006 to replace themselves with the National Salvation Front, based in Belgium, funded and supported by Saudi Arabia and founded by Abdul Halim Khaddam, who defected from the Bath party, resorted to Paris and started to work against the Syrian government from abroad by dealing with Israel and other states to facilitate the overthrow of the Syrian government and President.

So, all the attempts of the members of the Muslim Brotherhood (terrorist organization banned in Russia) to persuade “change” have failed. The Syrian government, and the opposition parties in Syria presented in the National Progressive Front, did not fall into the trap of “ink on paper”. That was the very issue that led to the struggle for leadership among signatories of the *Damascus Declaration* and *Unity Statement* between 2007 and 2009.

However, the movement of the Muslim Brotherhood (terrorist organization banned in Russia) came back to the public and political scene again in 2011, after the eruption of the Syrian crisis via its actors and proxies, and through its political bodies in Turkey known as the Syrian National Council [Lefèvre, www] which was announced in Istanbul on October 2, 2011.

The coalition was formed by mostly the same signatories of the *Damascus Spring*, *Damascus Declaration*, and “Unity Statement”. In fact, this time, the Muslim Brotherhood (terrorist organization banned in Russia) managed to be the widely perceived body in Turkey, dominating the SNC, monitoring and managing the armed Islamist militias in Syria against the Syrian government [Sayigh, www].

Therefore, since the outbreak of the anti-government Islamist protests in 2011, the aim of the Muslim Brotherhood (terrorist organization banned in Russia) has been to overthrow the secular government of Syria, replacing it with an Islamic rule fully based on Sharia law and Islamic foundations [Crisis in Syria, www]. Due to that, on June 27, 2011, Syrian government requested from more than 200 representatives of the Syrian opposition to hold a meeting in Syria’s Capital, Damascus. The meeting aimed to focus on finding and discussing mechanisms for a peaceful political transition. The meeting was under the slogan of “Syria for all, under a democratic and civil state”. But Syrian opposition figures prevented Syria political figures from the government to participate in the meeting. However, on July 10, 2011, the Comprehensive National Dialogue Conference was held in Damascus, after the failed opposition meeting. The Conference included both representatives of the Syrian opposition and the Syrian government.

The conference’s final statement aimed to underline that dialogue, stability; toleration-tolerance and non-violence are the only means for a political transition in Syria. Both initiatives did not see light, and as a result, on July 29, 2011, the Syrian opposition – within Syria and overseas – announced officially the so-called “Free Syrian Army”, supported by the SNC in Turkey and funded by foreign states including the UK, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the United States and France.

The situation escalated between the Syrian Government and the newly founded “Free Army” that is based on Islamic laws and dogma, the same laws and dogmas followed by the movement of the Muslim Brotherhood (terrorist organization banned in Russia). With the ongoing conflict, there have been negotiations with the supporting sides of the “Free Army” to push the Syrian government to make concessions. However, the political negotiations have not been as smooth as expected. Therefore, in January 2012, the al-Qaeda branch in Syria “al-Nusra Front” was announced, created and officially funded in Syria. Al-Qaeda annexed brigades and groups of the “Free Army” into its body, hoping to overthrow the government of Syria, and announce victory. The armed conflict reached the oldest two cities in the world; Damascus and Aleppo; the political capital and the economic capital of Syria.

However, in June 2012, in Geneva, the Geneva Conference on Syria was launched by the superpowers and the regional powers. Geneva aimed to fulfil the goals of a “transitional government body with full executive powers”. The first rounds of Geneva, under Kofi Anan and Lakhdar Brahimi; the United Nations special envoys to Syria, did not succeed to bring both sides to the same table.

On the one hand, Syria’s Government priority has been to counter terrorism. On the other hand, the opposition's priority has been to overthrow the Government and the President. However, in 2014, Syria’s president was re-elected by a percentage of 88% of Syrians, inside and outside Syria.

Consequently, due to the failure of Geneva talks again, in June 2014, the Islamic State (ISIS) was re-created after Abu Baker al-Baghdadi announced himself a “caliphate”. The very “organisation” initiates with annexing brigades and groups of what had left from the “Free Army” and al-Qaeda (al-Nusra Front), recruiting and calling foreign fighters to join the “holy war” in Syria, to create the Islamic State. Months after, in September 2014, the United States announced US-led coalition in Syria including Australia, Bahrain, Netherlands, Denmark, Belgium, France, Germany, Jordan, Morocco, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, Canada, Iraqi Kurdistan Peshmerga and Syrian Kurdish Democratic Forces (YPG – PKK).

As a result, the head of Syrian state, Bashar al-Assad, went to Moscow in September 2015, and requested from the head of Russian Federation military aid. Since then, the radical Islamist groups in Syria have been decreasing, whereas scores of negotiations and meetings have been held to find a solution to the Syrian conflict. For example, in January 2017 Astana talks were launched under the guarantee of Russia, Turkey and Iran. The talks have been focused on “releasing the detainees”, activating the “de-escalation areas” and “ceasefire” in some Syrian areas. It’s been already 11 meetings in Astana Talks, in which the stress is on the fact that there is no military solution in Syria, but only political.

In addition to Astana Talks, in 30 January 2018, Sochi Conference was sponsored and supervised by Russia. 1151 personnel of the Syrian government and opposition participated in the very conference. Iran, Turkey and Staffan de Mistura – the current UN special envoy to Syria – were among the participants. However, the Higher Commission of Syrian Negotiations of opposition, Kurds, America, France and Britain boycotted the conference. However, the outcome of Sochi was a 12 points paper, which is considered complementary to Genève’s meetings and to Decision No. 2254. After 8 years of severe armed conflict against Internationally recognised terrorist groups, which work under the supervision and consensus of Syrian opposition in Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the UK, France and the USA, the Syrian government and Syrian armed forces have proved to be the legitimate representatives of Syrian people, their aspirations to secularism, security and freedom, protected from a form of an Islamic State.

Conclusion

The Movement of the Muslim Brotherhood (terrorist organization banned in Russia) announced its “Political Project for the Future of Syria”. Before that, in 1980, the Movement of the Muslim

Brotherhood (terrorist organization banned in Russia) announced its “Islamic Revolution”. In both documents, the group of the Muslim Brotherhood (terrorist organization banned in Russia) proclaimed crave for transition in power, in accordance with the Islamist code. In such documents, progressive society was conceived as a reflection to the Islamic concept of *Shura*, aka consultation. In other words, the Society of the Muslim Brotherhood (terrorist organization banned in Russia) tended to adopt the Islamic jurisprudences as the means of rule, as shown in its recent document of March 2012. Regardless all, the Muslim Brotherhood (terrorist organization banned in Russia) movement has never hidden its political scheme, based on the “philosophy” that legislations, regulations and laws must be connected with Islamisation, and cannot be in a conflict or contradiction with the fundamental principles of the Islamic law. Therefore, having such transparent clarifications by the society of the Muslim Brotherhood (terrorist organization banned in Russia), in addition to the active role in armed conflict in Syria’s crisis since 2011; it shows that the confrontation between Islamism and secularism has been essential for the future of Syria in particular, and the Middle East in general.

That is said, the purpose of this paper has been to examine, scrutinise and explain the case of the Muslim Brotherhood (terrorist organization banned in Russia), a branch of political Islam, being an essential actor now and then in Syria. However, before proceeding with conclusion, we must clarify that political Islam is hostile to Islam, hence does not represent the true Islam – the same as the “political Christianity” is anti-Christianity, and “political humanity” is hostile to human principles, and the same as Zionism is the distorted demonstration of Judaism.

In other words, the paradoxical presence of political Islam in socio-political and economic spheres of Syria jeopardises the welfare of people with all their diversities, pluralistic cultures, faiths and beliefs. On the one hand, racial and religious movements, including the Muslim Brotherhood (terrorist organization banned in Russia) movement, promote themselves as civil and politically oriented with holding values of democracy and pluralism. On the other hand, such political movements have been proved to be a threat to humanity and the world peace, and never prove to be neither democratic nor plastic.

In brief, the Muslim Brotherhood (terrorist organization banned in Russia) movement has been an organisation of political Islam, whose ideology combines both fidelity to traditional Islam and national interests. The experience of the Muslim Brotherhood (terrorist organization banned in Russia) shows that political Islam today can be very influential even if it does not dominate or rule; it can gain local and international followers and support, exploiting sectarian tendencies and ignorance, reaching power *temporality* such as in the case of Egypt and Tunisia, creating a chaotic sphere of exclusion and discrimination, to be countered again and overthrown by the secular branches society and political parties.

Therefore, in a place like Syria, where Islam is not even the state’s religion according to the Syrian constitution, due to the multicultural and multireligious realities of Syrian society that dates back to more than 11 thousand years, political Islam, as well as religious and racial political parties, has been marginalised, countered and rejected, not only by the Syrian governments since the 1970s and according to the laws and articles of Syrian constitutions of 1970 and 2012, but also, by the Syrian people and their representatives in the Syrian parliament, considering such groups, as the Muslim Brotherhood (terrorist organization banned in Russia) and alike, aliens to the Syrian mosaic and social coexistence, jeopardising the social coexistence of a secular state and society.

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**«Братья-мусульмане» (террористическая организация,
запрещенная в России), в современной политической
истории Сирии: политические практики ислама**

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Аннотация

В статье исследуются траектории, касающиеся определения политического ислама и его связи с политической историей Сирии и текущим кризисом. С этой целью обсуждается один из самых видных акторов политического ислама «Братья-мусульмане» (террористическая организация, запрещенная в России), поэтому исследование посвящено идеологии и вероисповеданию данной организации. Авторы исследуют ситуацию в Сирии с момента обретения ею независимости до настоящего времени, демонстрируя внутренние и внешние аспекты борьбы за власть, и дают дальнейшие комментарии относительно перспектив политического будущего Сирии и политического ислама. Основное внимание уделяется вопросу политического ислама, который представлен «Братьями-мусульманами» (террористическая организация, запрещенная в России). Анализируются историческое существование «Братьев-мусульман» (террористическая организация, запрещенная в России) в Сирии, их статус и роль в продолжающемся конфликте. Затрагивается вопрос о том, смогут ли концепции и представления «Братьев-мусульман» (террористическая организация, запрещенная в России) стать адекватной заменой нынешней форме правления в Сирии.

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Ключевые слова

Политический ислам, «Братья-мусульмане» (террористическая организация, запрещенная в России), политические практики, политические акторы, политическое участие, Сирия.

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