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CEE ACTIVITIES OF THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD: MAPPING THE IKHWAN'S PRESENCE IN THE REGION

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INTRODUCTION

The Muslim Brotherhood is many things to many observers. Some label it a terrorist organisation,[1] while others accept it as a modernist movement.[2] There is a reason as to why this entity is challenging to pinpoint. It has constantly evolved and, since its foundation in the early 20th century, it has developed structures in multiple countries, where it has taken various forms and adjusted its activities accordingly. During the course of the past century in various Middle Eastern countries, the Brotherhood has cooperated with regimes, gone underground, collaborated with former opponents, been forced to exile, or adopted terrorism as a tactic depending on the country and time of scrutiny. Its scope is wide but regardless of the composition it uses, it has been consistent in one matter all along, its goal to restore Islamic values in Muslims, revive Islamic social order in Egypt, and ultimately create a caliphate of Islamic states.[3]

In the West, the Muslim Brotherhood's goals differ given that the population is not Muslim majority. The Brotherhood's intentions are still debated between what Islamism expert Lorenzo Vidino calls "optimists" and "pessimists". The former argue the Brotherhood is a useful force for integrating local Muslims, while the latter see the Brotherhood as a subversive force Islamising the Muslim community and separating it from the larger Western community.[4] Notwithstanding this debate, the Brotherhood has a clear modus operandi for operating in Europe. It was first established as loosely cooperating national branches, but the Brotherhood later formed supranational structures in an effort to influence the European Union. In that process, it became successful in establishing a leadership presence within the Muslim community and cultivated an image of representing a moderate version of political Islamist ideology.

This new project aims to shed light on the Brotherhood's activities in the part of Europe that has until recently been closed off to such movements. The Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) region is comprised of a diverse environment regarding Muslim integration. Some countries have Muslim majorities; in others, they represent historic minorities; and finally, some countries have had very little experience with Muslim communities in general. Naturally, the Brotherhood's activity in the CEE has differed from its activities in other parts of Europe. However, currently, a fuller study mapping its presence in CEE is lacking. To expand on the subject further, the following subsection will attempt to deconstruct key traits of the Muslim Brotherhood through a brief historical overview, while simultaneously highlighting the multifaceted nature of the movement as a whole.

THE PHENOMENON OF THE BROTHERHOOD

The movement was founded in 1928 in Egypt as part of the opposition to the Western occupation of the country. Egypt was still under British rule at the time but had declared independence a few years prior, and the Muslim Brotherhood took part in the debate concerning the future political system of the country. Some scholars sided with secular ideas, but Hassan Al-Banna, a charismatic schoolteacher in Ismailia, Egypt, disagreed and became increasingly angered by Western influence and morals. Instead, Al-Banna pointed towards the moral decline of Egyptian Muslims as a result of the British influence and argued for a pan-Islamic nationalism in hopes of bringing back the caliphate, founding the Muslim Brotherhood.[5] His movement adopted an ideology that sought to return to the early traditions of Muslim piety, which is encapsulated in the Brotherhood's longstanding slogan, "Islam is the solution". The movement stood in stark opposition to proponents of secularism, who it considered to have been "seduced by the European ways".[6] Secularism was perceived by the Brotherhood as dangerous,[7] although there were periods when the it decided to cooperate with secular forces, such as in the 1980s or during the 2011 Arab Spring in Egypt.[8] Despite its occasional cooperation with secular movements and leaders, the anti-secular spirit remained in the movement and is an important part of its ideological tenets. For example, when the Brotherhood came to power in Egypt in 2012, it

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1   The governments of Bahrain, Egypt, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Syria, and the United Arab Emirates labelled it a terrorist organisation. Counter Extremism Project. Muslim Brotherhood Report. https://www.counterextremism.com/sites/default/files/threat_pdf/Muslim%20Brotherhood-01292020.pdf

2   Western European countries such as France, Germany, Italy and the UK have seen Muslim Brotherhood-linked organisations become go-to institutions for consulting policies Islam. Lorenzo Vidino, "The Muslim Brotherhood's Conquest of Europe." Middle East Quarterly (2005)

3   Martyn Frampton, The Muslim Brotherhood and the West: A History of Enmity and Engagement, (Harvard University Press, 2018), 453.

4   The CEE Muslim Brotherhood in the West. Characteristics, Aims and Policy Considerations. Testimony presented before the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, subcommittee on Terrorism, HUMINT, Analysis, and Counterintelligence on April 13, 2011. (testimony of Lorenzo Vidino). https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/e4bd/68c658b54cf69631f4547d524420489d818e.pdf

5   Frampton, The Muslim Brotherhood and the West, 15.

6   Ibid., 453.

7   Barry Rubin, The Muslim Brotherhood: the organization and policies of a global Islamist movement. Springer, 2010, 23

8   Khalil Al-Anani, Inside the Muslim Brotherhood: Religion, identity, and politics, 147 and 155.

attempted to change the constitution to include the counsel of Al-Azhar scholars on matters related to Islamic law and expanded the interpretations of how to utilise Sharia as basis for legislative action.[9] This was interpreted as a gradual step towards introducing further religious values into the political structure in order to prevent alienating broader society. The movement essentially temporarily restricted its ambitions, which supported the Salafist position on fully implementing Sharia law.[10] The Brotherhood tries to stay true to its origins and at the same time reads the current mood, which regularly results in the adoption of a political strategy that emphasises gradual steps rather than revolutionary action. **The anti-secularism then seems to be ever present, ready to be acted upon when the Brotherhood deems it appropriate.**

The question of using violence has been discussed internally within the movement since the beginning. At one end of the spectrum stands the once militant Old Guard that avoids political participation and considers Sharia the source of authority,[11] while on the other are reformers, be it progressive reformers,[12] Islamist reformers,[13] or outright militants.[14] Keeping both wings happy has always been a central challenge for each leader of the Brotherhood. Even Al-Banna, himself a promotor of a pacifist approach, eventually gave in to pressure from fellow members that would later become the Old Guard and established a secret military wing called the Special Apparatus or al-Nizam al-Khass.[15] When the Brotherhood was accused of the assassination of Prime Minister Nuqrashi[16] it faced strong repercussions. The Muslim Brotherhood was outlawed and Al-Banna was assassinated shortly after.[17] The imprisoned Old Guard members of the Brotherhood developed a strong conviction to sacrifice the comfort of their lives for the movement during the Nasser's regime. Following the death of Al-Banna, the movement entered a state of political paralysis.

The 1970s spelled a very different time for the Brotherhood. The new Egyptian President Anwar Sadat sought to reconcile with the movement and released its members from prison. However, this resulted in the Old Guard assuming control over the Brotherhood by appointing themselves to the executive ranks of the Guidance Office.[18] At this point, they did not look to organise militant activities and were instead focusing on broadening their largely depleted ranks. The Old Guard appointed a new Murshid,[19] Umar al-Tilmisani, who they assumed would be easy to control.[20] Absorbing the largest student activist movement in Egypt called al-Jama'at al-Islamiya helped them replenish the membership ranks but also presented the old issue of appeasing and incorporating various currents of reformists. The Old Guard managed to maintain control over the movement for the most part, which frustrated some of the new militant members who left the movement to set up separate groups such as the terrorist al-Jihad group.[21] After 1981 with Hosni Mubarak becoming Egypt's president, the Brotherhood entered another difficult period of political persecution. The new regime restricted political activism to be solely in the domain of political parties, leading some members of the Old Guard to flee abroad. What is interesting about this period though, is that the movement gained more popular support during this time because they were able to capitalise on a narrative of martyrs.[22] The Old Guard retained control of the group by not allowing any significant change in the Guidance Office's membership, leading disappointed progressivist members to found their own party Hizb al-Wasat.[23] Since the Brotherhood has attracted a wide range of members while working to keep them in line with the its mission, **the movement's authority is established by a select few who stay in secrecy by appointing a "front man" figure they are able to manipulate politically.**

Another aspect where the element of secrecy is exercised is the recruitment of new members. The essential part of the Muslim Brotherhood's modus operandi for recruiting is da'wa. In a religious sense, da'wa denotes the active spreading the word about Islam by Muslims. The Brotherhood, however, also uses this activity as a carefully planned

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9 Alison Pargeter, The Muslim Brotherhood: From Opposition to Power. Saqi, 2013, 256.

10 Ibid.

11 Frampton, The Muslim Brotherhood and the West, 49.

12 For example, Brotherhood's leader in the 1980s Omar al-Tilmisani and defectors from the Brotherhood who established the political party Hizb al-Wasat in 1996.

13 For example, some members of al-Jama'at al-Islamiya that were not militant but were influenced by Salafi literature available at their universities.

14 For example, the Qutbists, also known as Organisation 1965 and the militant members of the student activist movement al-Jama'at al-Islamiya once it joined the Brotherhood after 1975.

15 Pargeter, The Muslim Brotherhood, 25.

16 BBC, "Profile: Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood." BBC News, December 25, 2013. http://www.bbc.com/news/mobile/world-middle-east-12313405.

17 Pargeter, The Muslim Brotherhood, 28.

18 Ibid., 35.

19 Murshid is a Supreme Guide, the leading position in the Brotherhood and its public face. Hassan Al-Banna was its first Murshid.

20 Pargeter, The Muslim Brotherhood, 30.

21 Ibid., 40. The Egyptian Islamic Jihad group is known for being linked to the assassination of president Anwar Sadat in 1981 and for being one of the signatories of the infamous "Declaration of Jihad Against Jews and Crusaders" in 1998 that was one of the founding documents of al-Qaida. One of its former members, Ayman al-Zawahiri, currently leads the global al-Qaida network.

22 Frampton, The Muslim Brotherhood and the West, 10.

23 Pargeter, The Muslim Brotherhood, 50.

selection process for new members. Existing members tend to focus their recruitment efforts on groups close to them like family or colleagues, gauging for ideal candidates with the right traits such as obedience, capitalising on their political grievances and proselytising until the selected are persuaded. It is in this last stage the recruiters reveal they are in fact members of the Muslim Brotherhood.[24] At the end of this process, the recruits take an oath to serve the Brotherhood.[25]

Arguably, the most important idea to the movement is its collective identity that defines them as "Brothers". Al-Banna formed the Brotherhood's aim in opposition to Western thinking and promoted it above ideologies such as socialism, capitalism, or nationalism.[26] The key tenants of his ideology were inclusivity, adaptability, and practicability, which enabled the movement to address all social classes in society. Discussing Egypt's identity through an Islamic lens with all social classes was a novelty at a time when such discourses were a privilege of the elite.[27] Al-Banna was a skilful social activist with a vision to create an Islamic identity he called al-fikra al-islamiyya, which is an Islamic system – not just a religion – to be lived in everyday actions through a set of rules, practices, symbols, and meanings with an overarching aim to not only liberate Muslim nations from secular regimes and Western occupation but to install one Islamic entity uniting them all.[28] Al-Banna declared that the Brotherhood's greatest aim would be to implement a "universal system and mode of work" under Islam on a global scale.[29] He forged the Brotherhood's identity with this goal in mind by intertwining it with broader Islamic notions that stipulated unified action. Moreover, he transformed these notions into the movement's apparatus for a collective action on top of a system that managed its members and recruited new ones.[30] Essentially, he created **a movement where members think of themselves as a collective unit that followed a rigid hierarchy, where obedience is demanded through oaths and later rewarded by ascension through ranks, while disobedience is punished.[31]** He called this system Tarbiyya.

As has been shown, the Muslim Brotherhood is an ideological movement with anti-secular nature. Its stated goal is to revive Muslim values in Muslim societies to the extent that lives of people are led only according to the tenets of the Sharia.[32] Therefore, it is also possible to characterise the movement as revivalist.[33] Furthermore, the secretive nature of decision making of its elite who require total obedience hints at its sectarian and autocratic character. All things considered, the movement is set against what it perceives as harmful western values and as a result it can also be characterised as following anti-democratic values. The next chapter will briefly explore the movement's other iterations in the Middle East and Europe attempting to shed light on its wide range of activities in diverse environments paving the way for this project's research in a geographical area not yet extensively covered in specialist literature.

BROTHERS AROUND THE WORLD

Since being ousted from Egypt in 1949, the Brotherhood spread throughout the region. Saudi Arabia for instance invited some of them to help develop the Kingdom's education sector and to help found universities.[34] Members of the Brotherhood were similarly active in Qatar during that time as well.[35] Despite its leadership being forced into exile, this was a productive period for the Brotherhood. Thanks to close relationships with governing elites of the Gulf states the Brothers gradually managed to position themselves as public intellectuals with considerable clout over Islamic affairs in several countries of the Gulf region.

The movement also established its foreign branches in the Levant, the most successful being Hamas in Palestine. Although Hamas started as a quietist and pacifist movement, working as al-Mujama providing healthcare and education until early 1980s, it increasingly became more political and eventually overtook the Islamic University of Gaza.[36] Over time it established political, intelligence, and military wings and became involved in the planning and

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24 Al-Anani. Inside the Muslim Brotherhood: Religion, identity, and politics, 74.

25 Ibid., 129.

26 Hasan Al-Banna, "To What Do We Invite Humanity? English Translation of Maj'muaat Rasail (the Complete Works) Imam Hasan Al-Banna." The Quran Blog - Enlighten Yourself, June 8, 2008. https://thequranblog.wordpress.com/2008/06/07/english-translation-of-majmuaat-rasail-the-complete-works-imam-hasan-al-banna/, 16.

27 Al-Anani. Inside the Muslim Brotherhood, 54.

28 Ibid., 60.

29 Hasan Al-Banna, "Our Message in a New Phase". English Translation of Maj'muaat Rasail (the Complete Works) Imam Hasan Al-Banna." The Quran Blog - Enlighten Yourself, June 8, 2008. https://thequranblog.files.wordpress.com/2008/06/_5_-our-message-in-a-new-phase.pdf 8.

30 More on the ideology in the chapter The Power of the Jama'a in Al-Anani, Khalil. Inside the Muslim Brotherhood: Religion, identity, and politics.

31 Al-Anani, Inside the Muslim Brotherhood, 85.

32 Ibid., 57.

33 The author's use of this term is because it best describes the motivation of the movement and has been established in various forms in the works of John O. Voll, Shireen T. Hunter, Ira M. Lapidus, and Egdūnas Račius, some of whom directly connect the Muslim Brotherhood and Islamic Revivalism. The author reserves the term (Islamic) Revivalism for movements that strive to institute a holistic Islamic system that would govern both the public and private life of citizens.

34 Frampton, The Muslim Brotherhood and the West, 301.

35 Ibid., 369.

36 Hillel Frisch, "Hamas: The Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood." In The Muslim Brotherhood, (Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2010), 90.

execution of terrorist attacks since 1989. In 2006, Hamas landed a surprise electoral victory and assumed control over the Gaza strip. In Jordan, the Brotherhood cooperated with the monarchy since the 1950s and altered its structure and operation to resemble a political party or a charitable association, depending on the circumstances. After the 1989 elections, it received ministerial posts enabling it to influence Jordan's educational system. However, its political position gradually declined shortly after. Some imams belonging to the Brotherhood were arrested in 2004, and restrictive measures on Islamists were applied in the education sector to curb their influence.[37] Currently the Brotherhood's political wing holds 10 out of 130 seats in the lower parliament in Jordan.[38] In Syria, the Brotherhood operated as a political party from the 1950s but later formed an insurgency that became entangled in multiple conflicts with the government, including a battle with government forces in the city of Hama in 1982. The Brotherhood was subsequently outlawed and membership is punishable by death. Despite this, the group has survived in exile in London and formed a working relationship with their former opponent and Syrian former vice president Abd al-Halim Khaddam in early 2000s. Unlike the Egyptian movement, the leadership of the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood claims that it is open to pluralism and does not insist on imposing Sharia to govern public life.[39]

The Brotherhood has also established a presence in a number of Western European nations that provided shelter to leaders and members exiled during crackdowns against Islamist movements in the second half of the previous century. **France, Germany, the United Kingdom, and others accepted Brotherhood members as political refugees both during the Cold War, when for instance Egypt and Syria allied with the Soviet Union,[40] as well as after the collapse of the USSR.[41]** Western European countries allowed the Brotherhood to establish new branches. Gradually members of the Brotherhood were able to position themselves as representatives of a part of the Muslim community (also non-revivalist) in some European countries. For instance, Union of French Islamic Organisations, the Islamic Community of Germany (Islamische Gemeinschaft in Deutschland), Muslim Association of Britain, or the Union of the Islamic Communities and Organizations in Italy (Unione delle Comunità e Organizzazioni Islamiche in Italia) all have ties to the Muslim Brotherhood and, at some point, enjoyed positions as significant partners on discussing Islamic issues with their respective European governments.[42] The umbrella group for coordination of Muslim Brotherhood-affiliated organisations, The Federation of Islamic Organisations in Europe (FIOE), is based in Brussels and aims at representing the voice of all European Muslims to the institutions of the European Union.[43] Through a vast network of affiliated organisations, associations, institutions, and other legal compositions the Brotherhood became very successfully established in the public affairs of Western European countries.

Relative to other Islamist extremist groups, the Muslim Brotherhood has been viewed as a more moderate and organised Islamic organisation. Western governments in particular have noted the Egyptian Brotherhood attempts to steer away from violence in the later decades of the last century. When juxtaposed with jihadist movements, the overall assessment of some European governments was that the group belonged to the moderate camp.[44] To some extent the Brotherhood has also capitalised on the narrative of being political "martyrs" after the Brotherhood was ousted from power in Egypt in 2012. This sentiment was not shared among large segments of the Egyptian public.[45] **However, the approach is now changing, and the governments of Western Europe have started re-evaluating their positions on Islamist movements.** The United Kingdom has gone through phases of reengaging with the Muslim Brotherhood in 2005 in order to prevent British Muslims' radicalisation to launching the Counter-Extremism Strategy in 2015, defining the ideology of Al-Banna and Islamism part of the problem.[46] In the German state of North Rhine-Westphalia a report released in 2018 by the security services concluded that "in the long run, the threat posed by legalistic Islamism to the liberal democratic system is greater than that of jihadism."[47] And finally, the French president Emmanuel Macron has recently openly talked about the dangers of political Islam and declared a new strategy to address some of its issues.[48] These acts signal a change in the official position, but it is yet to be seen how far the governments are prepared to push back and what reaction the individual Muslim Brotherhood branches will decide to take towards these new approaches.

37 Juan José Escobar Stemmann, "The crossroads of Muslim brothers in Jordan." In The Muslim Brotherhood, (Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2010), 61.

38 Khetam Malkawi, "IAF, Allies Win 15 Seats at 18th Parliament - Leader." Jordan Times, September 23, 2016. https://www.jordantimes.com/news/local/iaf-allies-win-15-seats-18th-parliament-—-leader.

39 Robert G. Rabil, "The Syrian Muslim Brotherhood." In The Muslim Brotherhood, 73-88 (Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2010), 85.

40 Lorenzo Vidino, The Muslim Brotherhood's Conquest of Europe. Middle East Quarterly (2005), 26.

41 Ali Sadreddine Al-Bayanouni, the leader of the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood, was granted political refugee status and moved to London in 2000.

42 Lorenzo Vidino, The Muslim Brotherhood's Conquest of Europe.

43 Steven Merley, The Federation of Islamic Organizations in Europe. 2008. Available at: https://www.globalmbwatch.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/The-Federation-of-Islamic-Organizations-in-Europe.pdf [Accessed 15 May 2020].

44 Frampton, The Muslim Brotherhood and the West, 348.

45 Nathan J. Brown, "Political Islam Becomes Less Political." Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, March 11, 2014. https://carnegieendowment.org/2014/03/11/political-islam-becomes-less-political-pub-54957.

46 Frampton, The Muslim Brotherhood and the West, 430-440.

47 Lorenzo Vidino, "Emmanuel Macron's War on Islamism Is Europe's Future." Foreign Policy, February 24, 2020. https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/02/24/emmanuel-macrons-war-on-islamism-is-europes-future/.

48 Emmanuel Macron, February 18, 2020. https://www.elysee.fr/emmanuel-macron/2020/02/18/proteger-les-libertes-en-luttant-contre-le-separatisme-islamiste-conference-de-presse-du-president-emmanuel-macron-a-mulhouse [Accessed 15 May 2020].

The activities of the Muslim Brotherhood, its internal structure, decision making, and connections to governing elites are best documented in the Middle East region. Alison Pargeter has covered the group's beginning in both Egypt and Syria, showed its international aspect and examined its branches in France, Germany, and the United Kingdom.[49] Barry Rubin's book went further and discussed not only Jordan and Hamas as the Brotherhoods Palestine's branch but also analysed the structure of the Brotherhood in North America.[50] Martyn Frampton's work sheds light on the relationships between the Brotherhood and West, namely the foreign policy of the governments of the United States and the United Kingdom.[51] Lorenzo Vidino has covered the Brotherhood's activities in the West in multiple publications.[52] All in all, the coverage of the topic both in the Middle East and Western Europe along with the United States is fairly extensive. What is lacking, however, is an analysis of the Brotherhood's activities in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). Governments in the CEE did not declare the Brotherhood a terrorist organisation, but they did not welcome its members as refugees – placing the Brotherhood in an interesting position for analysis. This project will attempt to comprehend, analyse, and outline this current situation for a selection of countries within CEE.

A MISSING PIECE

Although the developments in the Western Europe are certainly interesting, the neighbouring region of CEE has not been present in the discourse almost at all. There is very little known about Brotherhood activities in the post-Communist countries, which did not accept Islamist refugees during the Cold War. To the contrary, they accepted exchange students from the secular and autocratic regimes that had friendly relationships with the Communist regimes. Some countries possess historical minority Muslim communities such as Tatars in Poland or Ukraine that are historically integrated within their societies. The history of Muslim communities in the Balkans is different altogether. The majority of these countries have autochthonous Muslim communities of varying sizes from the times of the Ottoman empire, meaning the framework of assimilation under multiculturalism as accepted in Western Europe is not applicable. **Revivalist ideology could not penetrate, establish itself within the society, and be tolerated by the regimes of the USSR, Yugoslavia, and Communist satellite states**. Wahhabi and Salafi groups were able to establish roots in the region and particularly the Balkan countries of the region during the 1990s after the fall of these regimes and aided by the regional conflicts during that time. Such unique conditions present a different set of challenges to the Muslim Brotherhood, prompting the question of how do its activities and behaviour appear in an environment that has recently opened its borders but simultaneously shown open animosity towards Muslims?

One indication of this region's importance to the Muslim Brotherhood is demonstrated by the fact that the FIOE established a special department for it.[53] **The movement is in fact already active there as evidenced by the fact that the Shura Council, the parliamentary body of the FIOE, held a meeting in Sarajevo at the end of October 2016.** The Brotherhood's official website mentions news that touch upon the situation in these countries and reports concerning meetings of Muslim Brotherhood representatives with government representatives in the region, although for most of these events, the reports by the Muslim Brotherhood are the only sources reporting such events.[54] Such overtures may become even more prevalent given the current COVID-19 crisis, which has tested the limits of countries' health care systems and the global economy. Islamic groups, such as the Brotherhood, are likely to be keen to exploit social discontent of disenfranchised segments of Muslim communities in these affected countries in order to broaden their influence under the guise of providing the much needed medical and social services. These concerns have already been raised by the UK's Middle East Minister James Cleverly.[55] The raison d'être of this project becomes obvious after considering how much current information is missing about what happens in any of these countries. The existing literature published on the Brotherhood's connection to CEE focuses on the historical overview of Ottoman's Caliphate proselytisation of both urban and rural populations,[56] but studies on today's landscape are missing entirely.

Given this situation, there is a clear need for a full-scale mapping of the Brotherhood's networks and activities across all countries. The scope of this research does not allow to account for all of them, hence a subset of countries divided into clusters was devised according to types of environment (see Table 1). Based on the presence of three groups: converts, expatriates, and autochthonous community, as well as their official representation vis-à-vis the state in both registered and non-registered mosques and/or organisations. Another division was along the lines of whether the Muslim population is a majority or minority in the given country. The focus of this study is on countries

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49 Pargeter, The Muslim Brotherhood, 2013.

50 Rubin, The Muslim Brotherhood, 2010.

51 Frampton, The Muslim Brotherhood and the West, 2018.

52 Most complete examples are his two latest books: Vidino, Lorenzo. The new Muslim brotherhood in the West. Columbia University Press, 2010. and The Closed Circle: Joining and Leaving the Muslim Brotherhood in the West. Columbia University Press, 2020.

53 Merley, The Federation of Islamic Organizations in Europe, 27.

54 See https://www.ikhwanweb.com/article.php?id=28733&ref=search.php, https://www.ikhwanweb.com/article.php?id=30293&ref=search.php https://www.ikhwanweb.com/article.php?id=30196&ref=search.php https://www.ikhwanweb.com/article.php?id=32389&ref=search.php [all accessed 15 May 2020]

55 Thomas Harding, "Britain 'Closely Monitoring' Efforts by Muslim Brotherhood to Exploit Covid-19." The National, May 12, 2020. https://www.thenational.ae/world/britain-closely-monitoring-efforts-by-muslim-brotherhood-to-exploit-covid-19-1.1018301.

56 Nathalie Clayer, Muslim Brotherhood Networks in South-Eastern Europe. Institut für Europäische Geschichte, 2011.

that have a minority Muslim population, with one control case. Given the conditions set forth above, four clusters of countries were identified:

▶ Countries with a significant solely autochthonous population
▶ Countries with a small autochthonous population (also beached diaspora from a neighbouring country) and also small expatriate and convert communities
▶ Countries with an assimilated autochthonous population, converts, and expatriate communities
▶ Countries with only converts and expatriate communities

Cluster of countries				
	Cluster 1	Cluster 2	Cluster 3	Cluster 4
Community	North Macedonia, Bulgaria, Montenegro,	Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Belarus, Lithuania	Poland, Romania, Russia, Ukraine	Czech Republic, Hungary, Slova-kia, Estonia, Latvia, Moldova
	Muslim majority countries Bosnia and Herzegovina Albania, Kosovo			
Expatriates	—	✓	✓	✓
Converts	—	✓	✓	✓
Autochthonous Community	✓	✓ (Bosniak or Tatar)	✓ (mostly Tatar)	—
Representation vis-à-vis state[57]	Unitary Muslim religious organisation	National Muslim religious organisation	No national Muslim religious organisation	No national Muslim religious organisation

Table 1. Clusters of Countries

In each cluster, there are a number of countries that have unifying characteristics. Since this initial exploratory project cannot account for all of them in this study, five countries have been chosen as the representatives, meaning there is one country per cluster plus a control case. What the project will be looking for are Islamic revivalist groups since that is the typical environment in which the Muslim Brotherhood operates.

The first cluster is comprised of countries with significant solely autochthonous Muslim population that in the first group represents a minority (i.e., Bulgaria, Montenegro, and North Macedonia), while in second group the Muslim population is a majority (i.e. in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo). Bulgaria has a complex landscape of Muslim communities ranging from Turks, to self-identified Turks that also carry Roma identity to Pomaks (Bulgarian speaking Muslims).[58] Due to the highly complex environment of intertwining religious (Muslim) and ethnic (Roma, Turkish, Pomak) identities, Bulgaria has not been selected. Due to this complexity, Bulgaria should be viewed individually and is not representative of the other countries in this category. Montenegro's unitary religious organisation, the Islamic Community of Montenegro, offers a small possibility of encounter revivalist factions that are the focus of

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57 This row portrays the status of Islamic administrations as recognised by the state they reside in, inspired by the description used in the book Muslims in Eastern Europe by Egdūnas Račius (Edinburgh).
The 'Unitary Muslim religious organisation' encompasses administrations that are the solely recognised entities that represent a Muslim population in a given country. 'National Muslim religious organisations' mean multiple Islamic administrations organised and recognised by the state while they represent a certain nation or ethnicity at the same time. 'No national Muslim religious organisation' is a grouping of a plethora of organisations that have various forms, from registered religious entities to NGOs not representing any particular nation, only a religious identity.
58 Egdūnas Račius, Muslims in Eastern Europe. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018.

this research. This leaves North Macedonia as the last country remaining in the Muslim minority cluster. North Macedonia is well positioned for this analysis because the Islamic Religious Community of Macedonia struggles to keep revivalist imams away from its mosques[59], which provides an opening for the Brotherhood's activities and influence.

Since the project's methodology focuses on Muslim minority countries, Albania and Kosovo as countries with predominantly Muslim population will not be examined. However, the second country selected for analysis from this cluster is Bosnia and Herzegovina. It can serve as a control case since the country does not host an absolute majority of Muslims, with approximately 50.1% of Bosnians identifying as Muslims.[60] Bosnia and Herzegovina should provide an interesting case given its unified Muslim community under the religious organisation, Islamska Zajednica. This research will attempt to understand whether it is possible to encounter Muslim Brotherhood-affiliated groups or individuals even in this environment, which seemingly lacks any revivalist forces.

The second cluster includes Croatia, Serbia, Slovenia, Belarus, and Lithuania. The last-named country has been removed from the study due to low numbers of Muslim communities, and even lower possibility to encounter Brotherhood's sympathisers. For example, according to the 2011 census, there were only 2,727 Sunni Muslims in Lithuania, the majority of which are part of the traditional religious community of Tatars that is both assimilated and decreasing in numbers. Therefore, it is unlikely that this community would be a target group for the activities of the Muslim Brotherhood in the region.[61] Belarus has a similar landscape. It is also considered an autocratic state that presents limited possibilities to conduct unobstructed research. Therefore, it will also be excluded from this study. Further south, Croatia and Slovenia also have small Muslim populations. The percentage of Muslims in both countries compared to the overall population is minimal, and a large portion of this community belongs to the autochthonous community of Bosniaks. Serbia, on the other hand, has an indigenous Muslim community divided between Bosniaks in Raška region (which is further divided between two different administrative bodies) and Albanians in the Preševo Valley.[62] Moreover, it contains a sizeable amount of expatriates who mostly live in Belgrade. The country has had Islamists enter the country as early as the 1990s and there are vibrant communities of expatriates and converts. The total amount of the Muslim population in Serbia stands at well over 200,000.[63]

The third cluster encompasses countries with well assimilated Tatar populations that have been integrated for centuries as well as much more recent expatriate and convert communities. Ukraine presents an ideal case to study. However due to the country's sheer size and geographical spread of its communities, it presents a logistical challenge. Furthermore, a limited study on one Islamist movement close to the Brotherhood in Ukraine already exists.[64] Russia presents an even bigger challenge with its complex federative system, multiple competing Muslim administrations, large geographical size, and prohibitive research environment. Given these complexities, Russia has also been excluded. Poland's Muslim community is a diverse case. It is estimated to be between 15,000 to 25,000 Muslims,[65] but these figures likely do not account for converts, expatriates, and Muslim refugees (e.g. Chechens).[66] Unlike in Serbia, the expatriate and convert communities are larger than the autochthonous population of Tatars. These marginalised communities clearly present an opportunity for the Brotherhood to influence their ideology. The Tatars are in an opposition to such efforts, making Poland a complex and dynamic case. Romania would also present a very interesting case, which has traditional autochthonous populations of Tatars and opposing revivalist forces, similar to Poland. However, due to the language skillset of the research team, Poland was selected as a case study for this project.

Lastly, **the fourth cluster** of countries that possess solely expatriate and convert communities is plentiful, but unfortunately consists of countries that simply do not have large enough Muslim populations. The best example for the study in this cluster is undoubtedly the Czech Republic, which has a substantial Palestinian expatriate community, ideal for project's mapping exercise. Slovakia and Hungary do not differ greatly from their neighbour in terms of composition of Muslim groups. At the same time, however, a further examination of these countries would not likely bring any added value to the final results of the analysis. Similarly, Estonia and Latvia have been ruled out based on the low number of revivalist movements in CEE to be included in the project.[67] Moldova has a small yet very diverse Muslim population from former USSR republics as well as Muslims of Arab descent. The Islamic League of the Republic of Moldova is the country's only Muslim community registered as a religious entity and apparently leans towards the Brotherhood's ideology.[68] Nonetheless, the Czech Republic was selected from this cluster, due to the language competences of the research team.

59 Ibid., 248.

60 Charles Recknagel, 2016. Bosnia Erupts In Feuding Over New Census Data. [online] RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty. Available at: https://www.rferl.org/a/bosnia-census-results-spark-feuding/27831183.html [Accessed 31 March 2020].

61 Račius, Muslims in Eastern Europe, 166.

62 Ibid., 218

63 Ibid., 220-230

64 Anya Munster, "Islamisation in Eastern Europe-A case study of Arraid in Ukraine." (2009).

65 See https://ekai.pl/muzulmanie-w-polsce-2/

66 See https://www.newsweek.pl/polska/ilu-muzulmanowmieszka-w-polsce-dane-i-wyniki-badan/qd75tr4

67 Račius. Muslims in Eastern Europe, 169.

68 Ibid., 182.

Having established the subset of countries that will be analysed as case studies in this project, based on practical conditions and adding a control study to test the methodology, the next step is outlining what questions the study aims to answer. Generally, the project aims to map the Muslim Brotherhood activities looking into the revivalist movements and, in case of Bosnia and Herzegovina, into the inner dynamics of its unitary Islamic administration and external groups that do not subscribe to the unitary religious organisation. To outline the potential penetration of the Muslim Brotherhood in the CEE region the driving questions will be the following:

▶ How many groups have ties to the Muslim Brotherhood and what demographic do they represent?
▶ What is the nature of these ties, how are these constituted and how do these respective links work?
▶ What access to the governments in the countries under consideration do they have and what methods do they use to gain that access?
▶ How do they cooperate among each other on the national and regional level?
▶ What is their relationship with Islamic groups of other ideologies?
▶ What are their short-term and long-term goals?

MECHANICS OF MAPPING

TWO AXES

Since this kind of mapping exercise has not been previously attempted on this proposed scale and the environments of the countries mentioned in the previous chapter differ greatly, it is first necessary to consider the known unknowns in order to ensure capturing the widest relevant range of organisations. The expectation is to find a variety of groups that might not all have a clear and unified ideology. For this reason, **it is vital to isolate the extremists from the moderates and look at the existing spectrum of the extremist revivalist ideologies, which will form the first, horizontal axis of the mapping**. Muslim revivalists strive to institute a holistic Islamic system that would govern both the public and private life of citizens and within their scope are four general groups:

▶ (Neo) Fundamentalists;

▶ Islamists;

▶ Post-Islamists and neo-traditionalists; and

▶ Jihadists.[69]

The general differences between the groups are as follows. In contrast to the (neo-) Fundamentalists, like Wahhabis or Tablighi Jamaat, for instance, who sought to revive the religious and social life of Muslims within a society from the bottom up, Islamists choose a top-down approach to reach the goal of the reinstitution of Sharia to govern public affairs to bring about the desired change of the re-Islamisation of Muslims. While (neo-) Fundamentalists usually do not enter the political arena (think Tablighi Jamaat), Islamists on the other hand, rely on politics. They are also regarded as modernists in comparison to (neo-) Fundamentalists. Post-Islamists and neo-traditionalists are a hybrid group sharing both of the previous ideologies' features, however, are quite distinct in that they go further with political participation and embrace pluralism. Lastly, jihadists are the most radical extremists, as they accept violence as a tactical tool for achieving their goals.[70]

While the Muslim Brotherhood uses the bottom up approach to rally support among the populace, it also engages with politics. Externally it organises activities on the grassroot level such as facilitation of religious, educational, and health-related services. However, da'wa is mostly used for internal purposes such as recruitment and strengthening inner discipline of its members. Most importantly, once the support among a large-enough segment of population is secured and its members cover a wide-enough spectrum of positions of authority, it engages in the political sphere, using its members to multiply the impact. For these reasons, the Muslim Brotherhood falls within the Islamist category. In Europe, the movement has been organising through federations establishing a moral communal system among Muslims they wish to represent to the EU.[71] However, there are now implications that people close to the Brotherhood have also become members of non-Islamic political parties.[72] However, there are now implications that people close to the Brotherhood have also become members of non-Islamic political parties.[73] Using violence in their effort has not been part of the modus operandi on this continent.

The CEE countries have a particular context that needs to be addressed before the mapping begins. Countries belonging to this region have historical experience with Islam due to either Tatar or Ottoman influences. Islamophobia has a different connotation there. It is based on the previous interactions as opposed to Western European Islamophobia that stems from uncertainties of future integration of foreigners that are also Muslims.[74] Having said that, there is a range of different attitudes towards Muslims from the state institutions depending on the country.

The country closest to resembling the environment of a Western European country is the Czech Republic since it has virtually no indigenous Muslim community. The mostly negative attitude towards Muslim immigrants displayed in the Czech Republic, is reflected even in the highest state levels including in its president.[75] This is unlike the situation in Western European countries where such sentiments are predominantly within the domain of right-wing opposition parties (excluding Italy). Poland sits close to the Czech Republic in its position on Muslims arriving from

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69 Ibid., 58.

70 Ibid., 51-54.

71 Federation of Islamic Organisations in Europe, Muslims of Europe Charter, (2008). http://www.itstime.it/w/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/new_muslims_of_europe_charter.pdf

72 Federation of Islamic Organisations in Europe, Muslims of Europe Charter, (2008). http://www.itstime.it/w/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/new_muslims_of_europe_charter.pdf

73 Aje Carlbom, "Islamic activism in a multicultural context: ideological continuity or change." (2018), 42.

74 Račius. Muslims in Eastern Europe, 369.

75 HNOnline, "Zeman sa moslimom ospravedlňovať nebude" HNOnline, 10 June 2014, https://hnonline.sk/svet/523077-zeman-sa-moslimom-ospravedlnovat-nebude [Accessed 15 May 2020]

abroad,[76] but has a different approach to Tatars who are considered to be well assimilated into Polish society and culture.[77] Both countries have experienced populist rhetoric about Muslim immigrants in the last few years.[78]

The Balkan region will require different prisms due to its larger historical exposure to Islam. North Macedonia, where the state officials worked in tandem with the Christian Orthodox church to reduce its Muslim population's rights.[79] differs from the Czech Republic and Poland. In North Macedonia, the question of faith is defined also as a question of belonging to the nation or being an ethnic minority that speaks a different language (e.g. Albanian) and there is fear of this population's secessionist intentions. Lastly, the context of Serbia is even slightly more complex since its Muslim population is split. The Albanian speaking part in Preševo Valley are viewed with caution by the political system because the country has seen another such region, Kosovo, declare independence. The Bosnian speaking part in Raška district founded the Islamic Community in Serbia with the aim of creating the national body of Muslims that is recognised by the Serbian state. However, this organisation is based on the Bosnian speaking Muslim population in the country. Therefore, the Islamic Community of Serbia resists attempts of the Islamic Community in Serbia to take such an official role. Considering the variety of environments, the question then becomes, how does an Islamist movement operate under these conditions?

The second axis of the mapping will therefore be of vertical character and will address the given organisation's relationship vis-à-vis the country in which it operates. As explained above, the range of countries present various environments in terms of their reception to Islam as a religion, Muslims as its adherents, and acceptance towards the Islamist movements, which creates an ideal scenario to explore Brotherhood's activities under varying conditions. **The underlying assumption this report will be using is: The more expatriates and converts there are in a CEE country, the more likely it is the Muslim Brotherhood is present within these communities.** The reason being, autochthonous communities are mostly composed of traditionalists practising "European" Islam[80] and are tied to ethnic identities, not global pan-Islamism, hence penetrating large groups like that would likely be difficult for the Brotherhood. It is the "new" groups that offer more opportunity to use revivalist rhetoric and ideology since there is very likely tension between integrating the Islam of expatriates from outside Europe with the values of a given country. This opens up opportunities to propagate for a new "new" type of religious thinking.

LABELLING

The mapping should encompass as many groups as possible whether they are formal or informal. Obviously, it is unreasonable to expect that all which seem influenced by the Muslim Brotherhood will share the same amount of conviction and appropriation of their ideology, hence the labelling needs to have multiple levels reflecting this reality. If we look at the situation in the Western Europe, we can see three types of groups emerging according to Lorenzo Vidino's classification.[81]

First are the groups that were established by members of the Muslim Brotherhood from Middle Eastern branches with the purpose of aiding those branches from abroad. These are secret groups with "formal induction, fee-paying membership, and the pyramidal structure" from small units to the leadership.[82] Second are the ones established by the same individuals from the first group to be the public side of the network. These groups deny connections to the Muslim Brotherhood, but they are there and visible through personal and financial ties, adoption of Brotherhood's literature, as well as participation in the movement's transnational initiatives.[83] A good example of such group would be the Muslim Association of Britain.[84] And lastly, there are groups which are influenced by either the movement's ideology or its approach to building a network within state structures but their links to the Brotherhood either faded or disappeared completely. These groups can also have linkages to the Brotherhood through individual members, ideology, and funding, but at the same time assemble individuals that are very far from the movement's spectrum ideologically.[85] Vidino cites the examples of Federation of Student Islamic Societies and organisations that trace

76 Jan Cienski, "Migrants carry 'parasites and protozoa,' warns Polish opposition leader" Politico, 14 October 2015 updated 12 February 2016, https://www.politico.eu/article/migrants-asylum-poland-kaczynski-election/ [Accessed 15 May 2020]

77 Dawid Gospodarek, "To Inicjatywa Bardziej Dla Katolików Niż Muzułmanów – Arabistka o Dniu Islamu w Kościele." eKAI, January 24, 2020, https://ekai.pl/to-inicjatywa-bardziej-dla-katolikow-niz-muzulmanow-arabistka-o-dniu-islamu-w-kosciele/ [Accessed 15 May 2020].

78 For Czechia see Naxera, P. K. V. (2018). Populistická konstrukce národa ohroženého migrací: CAQDAS volebního diskurzu českých parlamentních voleb v roce 2017. Sociológia, 50(5), 491-523. https://www.sav.sk/journals/uploads/10011205Krcal%20-%20Naxera%20-%205-2018.pdf

For Poland see Stefaniak, Anna. "Postrzeganie muzułmanów w Polsce: Raport z badania sondażowego." Warszawa: Centrum Badania nad Uprzedzeniami (2015). http://cbu.psychologia.pl/uploads/images/foto/Postrzeganie-muzu%C5%82man%C3%B3w-w-Polsce.pdf

79 Račius. Muslims in Eastern Europe, 248.

80 See Račius, Muslims in Eastern Europe on 'European' Islam.

81 Lorenzo Vidino, The Closed Circle: Joining and Leaving the Muslim Brotherhood in the West (Columbia University Press, 2020).

82 Ibid., 6.

83 Ibid., 7.

84 Lorenzo Vidino, The Muslim Brotherhood in the United Kingdom, (Washington, DC: George Washington University, 2015), 3.

85 Vidino, The Closed Circle, 6.

their origins to the Jamaat-e-Islami.[86] In an interview with Vidino, Kamal Helbawy, a former high-ranking Muslim Brotherhood member, mentions that the common practice in this type of groups is to have a small number of people actually linked to the Brotherhood only in the top management, while not even the senior level might not know about the organisation's link to the movement.[87]

Vidino explains that each of the three groups have different goals. The secret networks support the structures and individuals from their countries of origin. The public ones and in some cases the third type of Brotherhood-influenced groups aim to spread their religious and political views to local Muslim communities, become their representatives to the respective governments, and support Islamist causes locally and internationally.[88] Additionally, they have another, internal, purpose for the Brothers. For those Muslim Brotherhood members who move to Western countries, these organisations are supposed to prevent them from Westernising their individual lives. Helbawy in the aforementioned interview describes the Muslim Welfare House in the United Kingdom to be such place.[89] Although this is an example from the most developed Western structure of the Brotherhood, which the Muslim Brotherhood structure in the United Kingdom has become over the last decades, the idea of separating individual Muslim identities from wider society and creating a division of us versus them remains very clear.

Drawing inspiration from Vidino's categories, this report will design its own method that should reflect the reality in Central and Eastern Europe. Given the seeming lack of evidence in the literature of high-level members of the Muslim Brotherhood having permanent presence in the five researched countries, this report will use a different outline for its labels. The following classification will be used as guidance and only the final research results will showcase various categories in a more complete picture once the mapping has been completed.

The first level will represent groups that are openly part of the Brotherhood's networks due to their involvement as members, associates, affiliates, or any other relationships with organisations that officially represent the Muslim Brotherhood in Europe. By formal affiliation to such organisations (listed in Box 1), there is a clear intention demonstrated publicly on the part of the representatives of the studied groups to belong to the circle of revivalists. Thus, this level will be called **Muslim Brotherhood-affiliated groups** since it best describes a relationship that is official and placed within a structure of superior-subordinate dynamic. It also indicates the comfort of such groups being represented on higher levels by the international organisations' leadership that is linked to the Brothers. But most importantly it signifies the acceptance of the Muslim Brotherhood ideology within these entities as part of their political and ideological framework.

Federation of Islamic Organisations in Europe (FIOE)
European Council for Fatwa and Research (ECFR)
The Europe Trust
European Institute for Human Science (EIHS)
The Forum of European Muslim Youth and Student Organisations (FEMYSO)
European Forum of Muslim Women (EFOMW)
World Assembly of Muslim Youth (WAMY)
European Assembly of Muslim Imams
The Federation of European Arab-Islamic Schools (also European Union of Arabic Islamic Schools and Association of Muslim Schools in Europe)

Box 1[90]

The second level will require a more comprehensive analysis evaluating a multitude of factors. It will not be based on official affiliation, but the connection will rather have to be established from the activity of the studied group. Because the relationship between the group and Muslim Brotherhood may or may not be direct or explicit, the most appropriate name for such groups will be **Muslim Brotherhood-inspired groups**. Via a combination of factors that indicate inclination towards the Muslim Brotherhood either in ideology or through practical support, these groups unofficially and yet directly show intention of having a relationship with the Brotherhood, even if one-sided. The systematic evaluation of what indicators this study considers can be found in the next subchapter called Determining connections. This label will represent groups that are linked to the Brotherhood through their funding, resources, connections, and ideological support from Brotherhood's religious authorities. In other words, these groups have been influenced by the Brotherhood one way or another and willingly help fulfil the movement's goals in the country.

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86 Vidino, The Muslim Brotherhood in the United Kingdom, 2015, 4.

87 Vidino, Lorenzo. Kamal Helbawy: Pioneer of the Muslim Brotherhood in the West, (2020), 17.

88 Vidino, The Muslim Brotherhood in the United Kingdom, 2015, 4.

89 Vidino, Kamal Helbawy, 16.

90 The list of bodies has been determined based on a literature review, which composes of works of Steven Merley, "The Federation of Islamic Organizations in Europe." 2008, Aje Carlbom, "Islamic activism in a multicultural context: ideological continuity or change", (2018) and Guido Steinberg, "The Muslim Brotherhood in Germany." In The Muslim Brotherhood, pp. 149-160. (Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2010).

Finally, the third label will cover groups that are impossible to confidently classify as wilfully belonging to the network of the Muslim Brotherhood. However, for these groups and organisations there is evidence they could belong to the sphere of influence of the Muslim Brotherhood. This category will include groups for which there is a lack of sufficient information to classify them as belonging to the second category. However, this third category will only include groups for which there are indications that show the potential for a connection. As far as the methodology for this group is concerned, it will follow the model of the second label. Based on the inconclusive pieces of evidence the authors will gather during their work, the third label will logically represent a so-called **Grey area groups**, where the only possible conclusion can be that of a call for more information gathering and research on the labelled groups.

DETERMINING CONNECTIONS

Given the fact that neither the **Muslim Brotherhood-inspired groups** nor the **Grey area groups** are officially members of larger entities set up by the movement, their connection will have to be determined through their activities. Following the activity of the groups in the second and third label will be done on multiple levels. These levels have been chosen according to various types of activities the Muslim Brotherhood has been known to perform. As it has been mentioned in the chapter above focusing on the activities of various Muslim Brotherhood organisations around the world, the movement has always tried to adapt to the conditions in a given country to ensure its survival. Coming out of this effort is a wide scope of activities conducted in diverse areas. This report categorises them into three levels in Table 2: religious, social, and political.

The religious level should contain the widest range of activities as the Brotherhood is first and foremost a religious movement. Hence, the first category covers all written and spoken outputs as well as space in which religious activism can be carried out. What will be investigated is how the religious authorities from other Muslim Brotherhood organisations are addressed in groups' publications; whether there is interaction between the authorities and the studied group, for instance visits by the authorities to the group's communal events; what sources and publications are available in the libraries of studied groups, etc.

The social level shall include activities aimed at the larger society, performing services to aid in spheres such as education; healthcare; poverty alleviation, discrimination, family cohesion, and other social issues; but it should also include organising of events, fundraisers, or charities. Additionally, the study will look at forms of cooperation with other non-state entities, such as different Muslim and non-Muslim groups.

Lastly, **the political level** will address activities connected to supporting financially, rhetorically, in written, or otherwise, political parties and individual politicians. Participating in political demonstrations or election campaigns shall be included too. Supposedly that a group already has a working relationship with state representatives or political entities another area to be explored within this study are activities related to consulting on public affairs as well as presence in state programmes for instance aimed at deradicalisation.

Religious level	Social level	Political level
broadcast, chaplaincy, conferences, halal certifications, libraries, places of study, publications, sermons, songs and chants, etc.	charities, community centres, education facilitation, field trips, food distribution, humanitarian aid, interfaith activities, medical service, schools, social events, sports and leisure, volunteering, etc.	consultant roles to state bodies, deradicalisation programmes, integration programmes, lobbying to individual politicians, lobbying to political parties, political demonstrations, etc.

Table 2

While the levels are used to determine the connection of said groups to the Muslim Brotherhood, they will also be used to answer driving questions, answering how this connection is facilitated and to what end. In the end **the mapping should provide a comprehensive picture of which and what types of groups are affiliated with the Brotherhood, how they cooperate amongst each other locally or regionally and what links to the government or influence over decision-making they enjoy.**

Funding will act as a supporting element of the research for the previously mentioned three levels. The study treats it as an independent factor that will be utilised on case by case basis for individual groups. As stated at the outset of this paper, Central and Eastern European countries have kept out of spotlight in terms of outright Muslim Brotherhood presence. Nevertheless, with the years-long effort to spread its ideology throughout the rest of Europe via a mixture of humanitarian and educational organisations as well as social networks, the increasing diversity in Muslim landscape today may provide a fertile ground for the Brotherhood to try to gain financial foothold which would help the movement influence the way these Muslim communities view and practice Islam in CEE.

The 1988 foundation of the Al-Taqwa Bank in Lugano, Switzerland serves as one of the examples of the Brotherhood's earlier efforts to spread its influence in the CEE region. Under the management of Yousef Nada, the Egyptian member and the "finance minister" of the Muslim Brotherhood, the Brothers utilised the bank to send funds from Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates to a number of terrorist organisations and humanitarian outfits in Bosnia-Herzegovina in the early 1990's.[91]

A number of other CEE countries, namely Bulgaria and Romania, have recently been exposed to attempts by the Muslim Brotherhood to penetrate their societies despite initial lack of the group's traditional Arab-speaking basis among their populace.[92] However, with the increased flow of refugees of Sunni background from Syria, one of the significant strongholds of Muslim Brotherhood in the Middle East, the Brothers may gradually find popular following here.

Moreover, the growing inability or unwillingness of the state in many of the CEE countries to cover the needs of its respective Islamic communities, may provide the impetus for Islamic organisations to step in and provide the much-needed funding which has been known to be channelled through bilateral agreements, monetary donations from Islamic charities, or educational support.[93] Unfortunately, this funding does not come without strings attached. The increasing dependence on foreign aid subsequently weakens the self-sufficiency of the local Muslim communities and makes them more vulnerable to ideological pressure from groups like the Muslim Brotherhood.

While worrisome, such overtures from the Brotherhood may ease their way into the CEE countries. As such, any overtures in the areas of education, da'wa sponsorship, halal certifications, and medical supplies, should be carefully assessed in terms of its funding for any potential traces through state sponsors, namely Turkey, back to the Muslim Brotherhood. As pointed out by Hillel Fradkin, a Senior Fellow at the Hudson Institute, at the Muslim Brotherhood hearing of the Subcommittee on National Security in 2018, the movement has been known to benefit from a partnership with Qatar and Turkey, two countries who are supportive of the Brotherhoods' spread throughout Europe and beyond.[94]

One of the aims of this project will therefore be to map out to the extent to which the Brotherhood presents a threat in terms of funding of Islamic political discourse in the selected CEE countries and identification of any overt or covert financial instruments used for this purpose.

DATA COLLECTION

Given the more clandestine nature of operations of the Muslim Brotherhood in the Central and Eastern Europe, it is reasonable to assume not all information will be publicly available from the official websites or media coverage in the studied countries. Therefore, it is important to tailor the data collection to observable activity of the studied groups to be able to perform determining their connections to the Brotherhood. A variety of methods will be needed to cover each group as comprehensively as possible.

The first way the data will be collected is through a desk-based research composed of gathering information from primary sources such as the groups' websites, their published written, audio or video material on social media, speeches, interviews, printed publications, etc. Additionally, it is possible that a request of access to court files or other non-public documents will have to be filed in some cases. Included in the desk-based research will be a compilation and analysis of secondary sources that are available online such as published news articles, academic works, or books.

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91 Migration Research Institute, The Soft Hand of the Muslim Brotherhood in Europe, 7 May 2019, 2.

92 "Islamist Radicalization in Bulgaria," European Eye on Radicalization, November 1, 2019. Available at: https://eeradicalization.com/islamist-radicalization-in-bulgaria/. [Accessed 15 May 2020].

93 Ibid.

94 The Muslim Brotherhood's Global Threat. Testimony presented before the Subcommittee on National Security of Committee on Oversight and Government Reform of House of Representatives' Second Session on July 11, 2018. (witness statement of Hillel Fradkin). Available at: https://docs.house.gov/meetings/GO/GO06/20180711/108532/HHRG-115-GO06-Transcript-20180711.pdf [Accessed 15 May 2020].

The second method of collecting data will be semi-structured interviews conducted with a variety of actors that have been deemed relevant for the study.[95] This effort will be driven by direct interviews with the representatives and members of the studied groups, but it will also include other Muslim communities, be it revivalist or not, that find themselves in either a friendly or competing relationship with the targeted groups, as well as expert interviews with academics and journalists. Last but not least, interviews should be also directed at state officials whether they belong to the area of religious affairs, minorities integration, security or other. Essentially, the study will compose three types of interviews, one for the studied groups, another for the other Islamic actors, and last one for experts and state officials.

Lastly, field research will be conducted in all five countries and will mostly consist of visiting places of religious and other activity such as mosques, prayer rooms, Islamic centres, libraries, etc. Observations of these places will add value via an ethnographic dimension[96] of the research to the already compiled information mentioned above, although this will only be a supporting element of the analysis as the focus will remain on the primary and secondary sources.

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95 At the time of writing the world is dealing with the pandemic of coronavirus. Currently this means that state borders are closed between all European countries, EU and non-EU alike. Therefore, depending on the conditions some interviews will be conducted in the field while others using technology.

96 Coming from anthropology, an ethnographic type of research focuses on overtly or covertly observing people's lives, listening, asking questions and collecting all data possible on the researched issue. For more see Martyn Hammersley, "Ethnography." The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology (2007).

SUMMARY AND NEXT STEPS

While the coverage of Muslim Brotherhood's activities, its affiliated organisations, and aims in Western European countries have been plentiful, a more detailed analysis of the movement's activities in Central and Eastern Europe is still lacking. This project will cover five countries from the region representing five discrete environments. Due to the differences in the countries' histories, presence of Muslim communities, the status of Muslim communities within the respective nations and their identity, manoeuvring these realities requires adaptation. How similar or different the Brotherhoods' tactics and operations are in these environments is what propels this research as well as answering the driving questions. Mapping of this kind has not been attempted in the CEE region. As the governments of the Germany, France, the United Kingdom, and the United States are starting to re-evaluate their position on the movement it would be beneficial to see what activities the movement has established on the ground in the Czech Republic, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Poland, and Serbia. The research will expand to various activities of the studied groups across three levels religious, social, and political and should ensure a comprehensive insight on the topic.

Subsequently, this report will be followed by a publication containing the first cases studies after evaluating all information collected through the methods of data collection outlined above. This will also be a test for the research methodology, bearing in mind it needs to remain flexible to adjust to cover the reality as truthfully as possible. Ultimately, the study will be concluded in a final report covering all five countries with a completed mapping and presenting a classification of the diverse modi operandi of the Muslim Brotherhood-linked groups.

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