
**OVIDIU RAEȚCHI, *FRĂȚIA MUSULMANĂ 1928-2023*
UN SECOL ÎNTRE MODERARE ȘI RADICALIZARE
[ENG. TRANS.: *THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD 1928-2023: A*
CENTURY BETWEEN MODERATION AND RADICALIZATION]
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This comprehensive work delves into the historical and ideological evolution of the Muslim Brotherhood (*al-Ikhwan al-Muslimin*), arguably the most influential political family to emerge from the Islamic world. Utilizing the participation-moderation theory, the author meticulously examines the Brotherhood's various manifestations and their political engagement over nearly a century. Ovidiu Raetchi, in what was initially his doctoral thesis, traces the origins of the Muslim Brotherhood, founded in 1928 by Hassan al-Banna, and explores its initial focus as a charitable and religious community (*jamaa*) specific to the Islamic tradition before evolving into a political entity. This transformation is placed within the wider context of the Middle East political landscape, including key historical moments such as the conflicts with the Egyptian state and the broader Arab-Israeli conflict.

Through a detailed analysis, the book captures all the stages that the Muslim Brotherhood movement has experienced from the perspective of political participation: severe repression (in Egypt, Syria, Tunisia, Algeria, Sudan, Libya), tolerance as a charitable and religious movement (in Egypt, Morocco), opposition or minor parliamentary party (in Jordan, Egypt, Kuwait), main governing party (in Tunisia, Egypt, Sudan, Turkey), minor governing party (in Jordan, Libya), and involvement in civil wars (in Libya, Algeria, Syria).

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The primary objective of this book is to study the evolution of the Sunni Muslim Brotherhood and its inspired political parties in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region through the lens of the participation-moderation theory and the repression-radicalization hypothesis. The book also defines key concepts such as Islamism, political Islam, and Salafism, and provides a robust theoretical background for understanding the nuances of the Brotherhood's evolution.

The author presents detailed case studies of the Brotherhood's branches in eleven Sunni-majority states, analyzing their ideological trajectories and political strategies, with each chapter providing insights into the unique political landscapes and challenges faced by the Brotherhood in these regions. These case studies include:

1. Egypt: The evolution of the Muslim Brotherhood from its foundation through its political repressions and eventual participation in elections;
2. Tunisia: The establishment of the initial *Mouvement de la Tendance Islamique* (Eng. trans.: Islamic Tendency Movement) by Rached Gannouchi in 1981 and its subsequent transformation into *Ennahda* (Eng. trans.: Renaissance party), emphasizing its commitment to moderation and democratic participation;
3. Turkey: The political journey of the Justice and Development Party (AKP), highlighting its blend of Islamic and national-conservative ideologies under Recep Tayyip Erdogan;
4. Morocco: The emergence and political strategy of the Justice and Development Party (PJD), emphasizing its moderate Islamist stance;
5. Jordan: The Brotherhood's long-standing loyalty to the Hashemite dynasty and its focus on *dawa* activities¹ and Palestinian resistance;
6. Gaza: The political rise of Hamas and its transition from a Brotherhood offshoot to a dominant political force, competing with Fatah in the 2005 local elections and the 2006 parliamentary elections;
7. Libya: The post-Gaddafi emergence of the Justice and Construction Party and the Brotherhood's political struggle;

¹ The spread of Islam through religious preaching.

8. Sudan: The failed moderation of the National Islamic Front under Hassan al-Turabi;
9. Algeria: The emergence of the Movement for a Peaceful Society (MSP) and its shift towards a centrist and moderate political stance;
10. Syria: The radicalization of the Syrian Brotherhood amidst prolonged conflict with the Assad regime and subsequent exile activities;
11. Kuwait: The formal political liberalization post-Gulf War allowed Islamist formations like the Islamic Constitutional Movement (HADAS²), a Brotherhood branch, to advocate for Sharia through a long-term approach centered on religious teachings.

The applied methodology includes a systematic analysis of social documents through content analysis and case studies of each national Brotherhood, using criteria such as Sharia as the sole source of legislation, the status of religious minorities and women, educational Islamization, and attitudes towards Israel, Jihad, and the West. The research measures the impact of factors like charismatic leadership, independence from the central organization, pre-existing secular structures, and religious and territorial homogeneity on the moderation-radicalization spectrum. It also explores the relationship between repression and radicalization, providing empirical evidence to support theoretical claims.

Ovidiu Răețchi concludes his analysis by noting that the Brotherhood's general trend has been towards moderation, despite instances of radicalization. He categorizes the various Brotherhood-inspired parties into four types based on their ideological adherence to the Quran: scripturalist, pragmatic, conservative, and modernist Islamic parties. The author emphasizes the dialectical relationship between regimes and Islamists, suggesting that the commitment to democratic values by regimes influences the Islamists' behavior.

In the author's own words: "In a Sunni authoritarian or hybrid regime, the decision of Islamists to engage in systemic participation and to moderate their discourse and behavior is not always rewarded with a similar reaction from the regime. On the contrary, to secure its power and prevent significant electoral

² The years following the Gulf War, specifically 1991-1992, marked a period of political liberalization in Kuwait during which Islamist organizations could formalize their existence. Among them, the Islamic Constitutional Movement (HADAS) was founded on March 31st, 1991, and participated in the 1992 parliamentary elections, representing a moderate branch of the Muslim Brotherhood.

gains by the Ikhwan [author’s note: Muslim Brotherhood], the regime will employ various forms of repression, which the Brotherhood parties must withstand”³.

This book represents a significant contribution to the field of political science and Middle Eastern studies, offering a nuanced understanding of the Muslim Brotherhood’s role in shaping political Islam. It underscores the complex interplay between political participation, ideological moderation, and state repression, making it an essential resource for understanding the historical and ideological evolution of the Muslim Brotherhood and its political engagements across the Sunni Muslim world. It, also, offers valuable insights into the factors driving the moderation or radicalization of Islamist movements, providing a systematic analysis of one of the most influential political families in the Islamic world. Raețchi’s book offers a thorough and scholarly analysis for anyone seeking to understand the intricacies of the Muslim Brotherhood’s political strategies and its impact on the Islamic world. It is a valuable resource for students, researchers, and anyone interested in the evolution of political Islam.

³ Ovidiu Raețchi, *Frăția Musulmană 1928-2023. Un secol între moderare și radicalizare* (Bucharest: Corint, 2023), 296.