



www.invisible-dog.com

invisibledog@email.com

THE DOWNFALL OF THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD

It seemed as if the Arab springs had awoken the Middle East and North Africa from a long political lethargy. These were countries where military regimes, dictatorships, corruption and violations of human rights had until then prevailed. The expectations were high and, as rebellions and protests followed one another, people began to believe in their right to a better future.

What did these claims have in common? From a wider perspective it was political Islam, the sole alternative mechanism for the transmission of consensus under a one party rule. The autocracies blocked the masses from expressing their political or social requests, but they could do nothing to prevent the imams and the mosques from interpreting and guiding a rampant social discontent. This explains why in most of the countries that underwent a change this was led by religious groups.

The rise

In the wider picture, the Muslim Brotherhood occupied the center of the scene. Compared to other political-religious groups, they were the first ones that consistently pursued a politicized view of religion or, if you wish, politics under religious guidance. The Muslim Brothers appeared in Libya during the revolution, took over power in Egypt, led the first armed rebellions in Syria, rule over Gaza through Hamas, are associated with Recep Erdogan's AKP in Turkey and have a great influence over the Al Islah party in Yemen.

During the initial stages of the Arab springs, the Muslim Brothers were in the forefront of the region's mutating political and social landscape. They are convincing, especially with those Western countries that are wary of their religious extremism. They obtain the support of the United States in Egypt, create political synergies with Turkey, they take the credit for spearheading a number of basic, but until then neglected claims: freedom, social equality, civil rights, fight against corruption.

It is almost taken for granted that, if the landscape in the Middle East and North Africa is indeed going to change, they will be the main actors. This circumstance widens their potential influence and attracts the interest of international interlocutors; they establish contacts and receive commendations like never before. Their radical ideas are exorcised by the fact that they are able to interpret the widespread need for social justice. All their main social activities are emphasized: schools, hospitals, support to the poorer sections of

the population. In other words, they are being praised for the very same actions that earned the Confraternity such a large popular support.

The downfall

But this is where the downfall of the Muslim Brothers also begins. This is because it is one thing to profess religious ideals while not in power, while it is much harder to turn those ideals into concrete governmental acts.

The Muslim Brothers took over power in Egypt democratically and started being what they were: a movement guided by an extremist view of their religion whose scope is to reform the societies it rules. They never pose themselves the question of whether what they are doing is right or democratic. They don't even try to take into consideration the ideas or other people's points of view. They have never done so in almost 100 years of history. The force of their beliefs leaves no room for doubt. Their concept of democracy implies imposing their religious precepts. Those who decide not to abide to their rules are not opponents, but enemies. Such a stance immediately lead to a clash with the secular fringes of Egyptian society, fueling yet more social unrest.

If compared to Ennadha's behavior in Tunisia, when facing the unrest that broke out following their social impositions, the Muslim Brotherhood was not capable, or decided against limiting their actions and taking into account the complaints of a mainly secular society. The drop in popularity that followed offered General Abdul Fattah al Sisi the opportunity he was waiting for. Ennadha, on the other hand, bargained a reduced political influence in exchange of a durable vital role in Tunisian affairs. The military's return to power in Egypt put's an end to the Brotherhood's rendez vous with history. The story ends here.

Dangerous crossings

The Muslim Brotherhood in Syria represented the historical opposition to Bashar al Assad's Baathist regime. They could have exploited this primacy to obtain both the political and military leadership in the attempt to topple the Alawite dictatorship. Instead, they were not able to do so and following an initial leading role of the opposition, they ended up being marginalized. This time around it wasn't the fault of the sole contrast between secular and religious groups, but rather of the leadership of the armed conflict being taken over by extremist Islamic fringes. The Confraternity found itself in the position of being a moderate group compared to the radicals. This is because if you try to rule with radical ideas you'll end up facing social unrest and this will undermine your role (as in Egypt), while if you try to turn your religious ideals into a military force you'll be marginalized by those groups that are way more radical than you are (as happened in Syria with Jabath al Nusra and ISIS). The experiences in Egypt and Syria have put an end to the leadership of the Muslim Brotherhood: they were incapable of going from an opposition group to a government force, their religious radicalism was unable to inspire people to take up arms.

In Libya, for several years the Brotherhood was hunted down by Muammar Khadafi until an agreement was found: its affiliates would have been released from prison in exchange

for them giving up their armed struggle. The deal was found through the mediation of Hamas and the Libyan dictator used it to deal yet another blow to the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group. After having filled the ranks of the rebels, the Brotherhood sought to play a key role in Khadafi's aftermath. The institutional chaos that still haunts Libya today did not enable them to take over the country's politics. Once again, the radical groups that continued their fight and did not disarm were the one that took over, as for instance did Ansar al Sharia in the Cyrenaica. The fall of Mohamed Morsi in Cairo dealt yet another blow to the movement's political aspirations in Libya, while not leaving any space for those wanting to continue the armed struggle.

The agenda of several regional actors has also had an influence on the Confraternity's actions in Egypt and the Middle East. Erdogan's AKP supported the Brotherhood and so did Qatar. Saudi Arabia, instead, was in favor of the Egyptian military. After all, the Turkish model of political Islam is what they had in mind for Egypt, while Qatar is playing its own regional and international spheres of influence game against the Saudis. Riyadh has never shared the vision of a political Islam, something which is against Wahabi beliefs.

A meeting with History

Today the Muslim Brothers are persecuted in Egypt, or rather, they are now back to being persecuted as they were in the past. Labeled a terrorist organization, they now share the same status of Hamas in Gaza. At the same time, the scandals that have rocked Erdogan have diminished their influence in Turkey, while the Brotherhood has been marginalized by extremists in Libya and Syria. Their downfall is complete.

The ousting of Mohamed Morsi in Egypt has also had the consequence of weakening Hamas. Isolated in the Strip's tiny borders, the Palestinian group knows it cannot survive without the supplies coming in from the Sinai. Hamas has first sought a political solution to its isolation and signed a reconciliation agreement with the Palestinian National Authority lead by Mahmoud Abbas. The mediation was the result of both parties' weaknesses: Hamas' as a result of the Egyptian hostility, the ANP's because of an endless and bound to nowhere negotiation with Israel. The return of Hamas on radical stances and their current conflict with the Israelis is but a suicidal tactic whose outcome is still not predictable.

But, as previously stated, Arab countries have also used the Muslim Brotherhood for their own hegemonic aims. In the ongoing clash between Saudi Arabia and Qatar – Riyadh is against the Confraternity, has recently declared it a “terrorist organization” just like the Egyptians, while Doha continues to support the Brotherhood – the Muslim Brotherhood has been turned into a pawn in the hands of others. The stand off between Qatar and Saudi Arabia (supported by the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain) is against the Brotherhood's best interest and has lead them to losing the support of a good portion of the Arab world. The same is happening in Yemen, where the Confraternity's political branch – the Al Islah party – has become part of the clash between Doha and Riyadh and this could have a series of negative consequences on the organization.

So, has the Muslim Brotherhood missed it's rendez-vous with History? It is hard to say because the effects of the instability in the Middle East are truly unpredictable. Going from

being in the opposition to being in power and viceversa is extremely easy in this part of the world. But the prestige and support the Confraternity had while they were in the opposition was soon lost when they abused the power they had conquered. This is to some extent the fate of all organizations that are born to fight the system, but when they become the system they seldom have a sufficient dose of experience or political intelligence to play their new role.

GAZA, HISTORY REPEATING ITSELF

The plight of the population of Gaza can be summarized in a few geographical details: over 1.8 million inhabitants, 365 square km, one of the highest population densities in the world (about 10 thousand people per square km) and one of the globe's highest demographic growth rates (2.91%). Of these people, 70% of them are listed by the UN as refugees.

This data explains why any Israeli military invasion produces several civilian casualties whom, unlike in the past, have nowhere to run since Egypt has sealed the Rafah border to refugees. The fact that there are several children among the dead is yet another demographic truth: over 43% of Gaza's population is less than 14 years old, another 22% is between 14 and 24.

The people of Gaza are caught in the middle of a war they did not ask for and that is being waged regardless of their will: Israel interprets its right to defence without any limitation in the use of its force, Hamas, instead, is using the tragedy caused by the war to regain the spotlight in the Palestinian political landscape.

The struggle for physical survival goes hand in hand with economic survival. The entire economy of the Strip was linked to the smuggling of goods from the tunnels heading for Egypt. Once these were closed by General Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, no alternative was left for the people of Gaza to receive what they were in need for. Even fishing, one of the few remaining jobs locally, has been seriously restricted by Israeli authorities who limit fishing vessels within a 4 mile radius. The economic figures are therefore significant: 22.5% of the population is unemployed, 38% lives below the poverty line. And those who are lucky enough to have a job, like the 60 thousand government employees, haven't received their wages for months.

Waiting to explode

When dealing with Middle Eastern affair, and especially in the Palestinian issue, it is recurrent of events igniting chain reactions that go well beyond their original or intentional scope. In this case, the situation got out of hand when on June 12, 2014 three young Israelis were killed near Hebron. Hamas was not directly involved, but Israel implied it was. This heinous crime was followed by drone raids over the Gaza Strip on July 7, to which Hamas respond by firing rockets and the crescendo lead to the current conflict.

History repeats itself, a long trail of blood that feeds hate and that pushes away any chance of a negotiated solution. This is what Hamas wanted, and this is also what Israel sought following the April 2014 deal between Hamas and the Palestinian National Authority that could have put both the negotiations and the security of its country at risk. We've seen this before, cyclically, over the last 60 years as in the recent past: "Operation Rainbow" in May 2004, "Operation Days of Penitence" still in 2004, "Operation Autumn Clouds" in 2006, "Operation Hot Winter" in 2008, "Operation Cast Lead" in 2009-2010, "Operation Pillar of Defence" in 2012 until the ongoing "Protective Edge".

As usual, the war is also played out on the media. The images of the victims in the Gaza Strip always have an impact on global public opinion and stir the consciences. And it is hence not surprising that, following the coverage of an air strike on civilians in the outskirts of Gaza, the local offices of Al Jazeera were also hit by Israeli artillery shots. The Qatar based broadcaster has been labelled by Tel Aviv's Minister of Foreign Affairs, the hawk Avigdor Lieberman, as Hamas' house organ. His colleague at the Ministry of Communications, Gilad Erdan, has said he will put the channel off air (the same sort of attitude that led to three Al Jazeera journalists being incarcerated and found guilty of supporting terrorism and putting Egypt's national security in peril).

Nor is it surprising that, following the UN's decision to open an investigation on the alleged crimes against humanity committed by both Hamas and Israel, a series of UNRWA (the UN agency for Palestinian refugees) run schools in the Gaza Strip were hit, causing yet more civilian casualties. Almost an Israeli challenge to the world. And, probably along the same lines, strikes were targeted against International Red Cross ambulances and against mosques.

After 60 years of useless wars, Israel still hasn't understood that the Palestinian issue will never be solved through the reckless and disproportionate use of force. They should keep in mind that it is the global support – with the United States in the lead – that keeps them afloat. It is therefore fair to ask what this new war is going to produce, if not more generation to generation transmitted hate, a long trail of blood guided by primitive revenge0 logics of tooth for tooth...

As far as Hamas is concerned, we should wonder why it decided to go on a head on military clash with Israel instead of seeking a negotiated solution. They know they are never going to win this war, that they are not helping the Palestinian cause and inflicting deaths and suffering on their own civilian population.

A political calculation

Hamas' political reasoning is probably dictated by circumstances: the isolation from Egypt, the downfall of the Muslim Brotherhood and their loss of appeal in the Arab world, Israel's tough line that has weakened the prestige of the ANP and that has paved the way to Hamas' radicalism, the appeals for help and solidarity that only Iran and the Lebanese Hezbollah (regardless of their different views on Syria) seem to be able to respond to.

The different actors in the region have different views on who to side with in Gaza: Egypt and Saudi Arabia are against Hamas, Turkey, Iran and Qatar support them. This is because of the role played by the Muslim Brotherhood in the Arab Spring and of Hamas being an offspring of the Confraternity. But, at the end of the day, Egypt has come out as a winner in the region's political turmoil. The al-Sisi led mediation to resolve the Gaza conflict has suddenly given a general who took over power in a coup, persecuted and killed his opponents, banned the Brotherhood and its political wing, a clean sheet.

As far as Iran is concerned, unfortunately for Hamas, Hassan Rouhani is attempting to legitimate his role by negotiating a deal on Tehran's nuclear programme, while the

Hezbollah are too deeply involved in supporting the Syrian regime. This means that little or no help can come from their side, while in the past it could have been possible to envisage the opening of a new front along the Israeli-Lebanese border.

The same could be said of the different Islamic terrorist groups in region, including Al Qaeda, who have not shown any support for Hamas. Actually, some tweets by a number of Jihadist factions have labelled Hamas as being an “apostate government” because of its fight for independence and freedom and not for God. The fact that they are being supported by Shiites only worsens their position in the eyes of Sunni extremists.

The conflict with Israel has also had an impact on the relationship with the ANP. President Abbas was forced to go from the criticism to both Hamas and Israel for the military escalation, to the reconciliation attempts and, finally, in having to side with then people in the Strip. Even Hamas is torn between the devil and the deep blue sea: those who want to seek a solution with Israel (and these are the same people who favoured a deal with Abu Mazen) and those refusing any compromise. The latter are the ones who are in the lead for Hamas at this stage and are competing with the radicals from the Islamic Jihad.

Hamas had recently suffered a drop in its popularity in the Strip. It now seeks to build on the consensus the war could bring to them to advance a series of requests during the negotiations: the release of Palestinian prisoners (some of whom were let free in 2011 in exchange for Gilad Shalit, but soon re-arrested), the Israeli withdrawal from the Strip, the re-opening of the border with Egypt, the possibility to build a port and an airport in its territory, the extension of the marine miles allowed for fishing, the end of the embargo on Gaza that began in 2006, the elimination of the buffer zone within the Gaza Strip forbidden to Palestinians.

In such a critical scenario, Hamas seeks the path to martyrdom and stubbornness, but it does so – and this is the most worrying aspect – by imposing sufferings and deaths on its own people. A conscious, and frightening, martyrdom pursued in the trade off between a military defeat and a political gain. On his side, the Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu is also pushed by the radicals in his government. Both parties are slave of their logics and self-serving interests.

Lessons for the future

In any useless war that doesn't result in any side winning or losing, the battle field is the only true test for weapons and tactics; a useful experience that will come in handy in the next round of the conflict. If we a look at the current stand off between Hamas and Israel from this point of view, there are a number of lessons that will be surely useful in the future.

Among the first teachings is that the Iron Dome (Kipat Barzel in Hebrew), the Israeli anti-missile system, works extremely well and is efficient in around 90% of cases, which is a great result. Furthermore, a new anti-missile system is on its way, David's Sling, and should be functioning by 2015.

The Israelis ought to worry about a number of other issues: the numerous tunnels that had been dug (over 30 were found, way more than initially envisaged) have forced the IDF to carry out a land invasion to locate and destroy them. This means that there is no technology at present capable of identifying them. Tel Aviv should also be concerned about the number of missiles in the hands of both Hamas and the Islamic Jihad. We are talking about 10 thousand rockets, 3 thousand of which have been fired. This means something in the Israeli intelligence system didn't work.

Even though Hezbollah has taught Hamas how to build its own rockets, the raw materials, the explosives and the necessary equipment to construct them have somehow entered the Strip. And this has happened regardless of the hostility of the Egyptian military that has tried to stop the smuggling coming from the Sinai. The interception on March 5, 2014 of an Iranian rockets filled Gaza bound ship coming from Iraq, that had stopped over in Yemen and was destined for Port Sudan, was probably only the tip of the iceberg.

Then come the tactics: those adopted by Hamas, and especially by its armed wing, the Izzidin al Qassem Brigade, reflect the training and the guidelines received from the Hezbollah. The building of the tunnels was part of this strategy, whereby Israel had the control of the air and Hamas of the underground. This led to the formation of specific teams within the Brigade, known as 'Morabitoun' (the sentinels), that worked beneath the soil. And, always according to Hezbollah's teachings, the tunnels had to be diversified according to their scope: economic (as the ones going to Egypt), deposits for weapons and rockets, security for the protection of the movement's leaders and military commands, for military operations and incursions into Israel.

It wasn't a mere political choice that put a halt to the Israeli invasion of the Strip, but a military one. The fight in an urban area implies a high number of casualties among your forces and this is an option Israel cannot afford. The advantage of armoured vehicles does not exist any more. It is not sufficient to have more fire power or weapons to prevail. And the more destruction you cause with bombardments, the greater defensive opportunities you offer to those seeking shelter in urban areas. Hamas has profited greatly from the teachings of the Hezbollah in the use of anti-tank weapons in urban contexts. As it has from a renewed wave of kamikaze attacks. Israel's unilateral decision to withdraw was not a conciliatory move, but an operational need. This is something we've already seen in the past during previous invasions that lasted long enough to inflict a sufficient amount of damage to the enemy (33 days in 2006 in Lebanon, even less than that in 2012).

Provisional outcome

Even the latest round of the war between Hamas and Israel will, just like its previous ones, lead nowhere. There will be casualties on both sides, the wounded, the thousands of people left homeless. Regardless of this, Israel will claim it has improved its internal security at the price of more hatred and thirst for revenge.

How many 'enemies' has Israel eliminated? Government sources in Tel Aviv talk about around 900 "terrorists". The fact is that the Izzidin al Qassem Brigade has a force of about 15 to 20 thousand men and its military force is basically untouched. The Al Quds Brigade

from the Islamic Jihad can count on 1-2 thousand fighters. This means that the UN data pointing to the fact that 60-70% of all casualties were civilians are basically correct.

If Israel's aim was to destroy the tunnels, then their operation probably reached its target. But if their scope was to reduce the threat coming from Hamas, the Islamic Jihad and demilitarise the Strip, then these objectives were not attained.

On the global level, every conflict damages the external image of Israel. The UN's criticism and the accusations moved against Tel Aviv add to this. The relationship with the United States is particularly tense. The Mossad went so far as to wire-tap the mobile phone of the US Secretary of State John Kerry during his mediation attempts. This nth episode of the war will surely not solve the Palestinian issue.

On the opposite side of the front, Hamas (together with the Islamic Jihad) has inflicted an unacceptable degree of sufferings on the people living in Gaza without getting anything in return. Their political gains within the Palestinian diaspora will last as long as the ANP's negotiations with the Israelis don't reach any tangible results. Hamas will surely face a hard time in the near future: the population is now without electricity, their homes destroyed, water and sewage systems have collapsed and there is no concrete for reconstruction. They won't be able to do anything without the aid coming from Egypt and the international community.

ISLAMIC NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS AND THE SPREAD OF TERRORISM

Islam doesn't have a Pope, a command structure, an authority helping worshippers to interpret the sacred books and providing their appropriate meaning. This circumstance has provided a fertile ground for all those who want to twist the words of holy texts to justify terrorism in its bloodiest forms. The different theological schools – ranging from those literally and orthodoxly interpreting the Koran (like the Salafis) to the more moderate ones (such as the Sufis) – end up fueling radicalism.

But those currents preaching extremist religious concepts, that favor the move from religious radicalism to terrorism, need a tool to transmit and spread their ideas. We're talking about structures capable of feeding radicalism, transforming it into extremism and then, closing the circle, capable of providing a harbor and financing for all those armed groups dedicated to Islamic forms of terrorism.

It is in such a context that we should analyze the role of Islamic Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs). They officially have a humanitarian scope, but the truth is, over the last decades, they have been the main tool for the spread of radical Islam not only in Muslim countries, but also in those developing nations where the financial support they have been able to provide has had a strong social impact. It is hence not surprising how Islamic terrorism has taken root in Africa and that behind the proliferation of radical stances Saudi NGOs, that is groups tied to an orthodox and radical muslim sect such as the Wahabis, have often been found.

The role of the NGOs

The role of these Islamic NGOs is therefore paramount because it brings along an antagonistic vision of the relationship with other creeds that goes as far as to conceive an aggressive military approach. They are tasked with proselytism (seldom turning into recruitment tout court), they spread extremist ideas, they create an inferiority complex on those receiving support, aid or assistance. Wahabi NGOs have, in the recent past, provided recruitment, financing, logistical support and training to Afghan, Bosnian and lately Middle Eastern mujaheddin. One of the people using such NGOs is the world's most famous Saudi Wahabi: Osama bin Laden.

There are several NGOs that are directly or indirectly linked to Saudi Arabia and, even though they might have not been involved in subversive activities, they are still responsible – willingly or not – of spreading an ideology and a religious approach that has fueled fanaticism in various parts of the globe that then turned into extremism and finally into terrorism.

The biggest paradox is that Saudi Arabia, apparently siding with the West in the fight against terrorism, is, at the same time, its main sponsor. We could debate over the fact that Saudi NGOs are generally private organizations and that they don't necessarily involve the State they belong to in their activities, but, then again, such a distinction is arguable because of the Saudi monarchy's links with the Wahabis and, therefore, of them

sharing their same set of beliefs. On the other hand, throughout the Arabian Peninsula and in the Middle East governments are usually supportive of these charitable groups so long as they don't affect their internal stability.

Controversial organizations

The fact is that over the years some of these Wahabi Non Governmental Organizations have been investigated or accused of being involved in terrorism.

- Muslim World League

Founded in Mecca in the 60s. Its main scope is the spread of Islam and the reunification of all those movements attempting to introduce Sharia law in their respective countries. This objective is pursued through the building of mosques, koranic schools, cultural centers and distribution of free (religious) textbooks. Following the 911 attacks on the Twin Towers their offices were searched by the FBI; one of its members, Abdul Rahman Alamoudi, was arrested for the financing of terrorist groups. The League is still active today and has offices across five continents.

- "Al Haramain" Foundation

It's central office is in Riyadh. It's main scope is the assistance of Islamic communities in the world. In the past, it has financed the mujaheddin in Afghanistan. The Foundation was thought to have played a role in the 1998 bombings of the US embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam, they have also been heavily involved in Somalia as they had been in Bosnia in the support of the mujaheddin battalions fighting for the government in Sarajevo. They are accused of being in contact with the Egyptian Al Jamaat al Islamiyah. In September 2004 the Foundation was accused by the US Department of Treasury of being linked to Al Qaeda and to Osama bin Laden. It was then banned by the UN Security Council.

- "Al Mouwafaq" Foundation

Also based in Riyadh, it has offices in Europe and the Balkans. It's main scope is to provide support to Muslim refugees throughout the world. In the recent past it was supporting Tunisian Islamic groups (while Ben Ali was in power and whom, once he was ousted, fled to Saudi Arabia). It has been accused of having ties to the Egyptian Al Jamaat al Islamiyah and of having provided financial support to a battalion of Egyptian mujaheddin fighting in Bosnia who bore the name Mouwafaq Brigade. Similarly, the supported training camps in Afghanistan. Its Monaco, Germany, office was suspected of being linked to Al Qaeda. In October 2001 the United States accused one of the main financiers of the Foundation, the Saudi multimillionaire Yassi al Qadi, of having financed terrorism, but no action was taken against the organization.

- Islamic Coordination Council

Founded in 1986, it has its main offices in Peshawar, Pakistan, and supports Afghan refugees thanks to private funds mainly coming from Saudi Arabia. This organization has also been suspected of being involved in terrorist activities.

- International Islamic Relief Organization (Hay'at al Ighatha al Islamiyah al Alamyah)

Founded in 1979, it is based in Jedda. It has offices in 90 countries. Before its foundation its tasks were carried out by the Department for World Islamic Aid, an organism belonging to the Muslim World League. Its main scope is to provide assistance to refugee orphans and victims of conflict. It does so by engaging a series of Islamic banks and financial organizations. This NGO's name has often been associated to the support provided to several radical North-African groups, like the Islamic Jihad and the Al Jamaat al Islamiyah in Egypt, Ennahda in Tunisia (while Rachid Ghannouchi was in exile in London), the Algerian Islamic Salvation Front, Hamas, Osama bin Laden himself and the mujaheddin in Bosnia. One of its associates, Ramzi Ahmed Yousef, was involved in the 1993 attack against the World Trade Center in New York.

There's more

Apart from private Wahabi NGOs, the Saudi government also has its own charity, the Saudi High Commission, that, even though it has not pursued terrorism, has provided assistance to groups like Hamas or the Algerian FIS.

As far as Africa is concerned, another organization, the Africa Muslims Agency, is very active. Based in Kuwait, it is not linked to the Wahabis, but to the Muslim Brotherhood. It is present in 34 countries across Africa. Self-declared politically neutral, dedicated to the spread of the Dawah (Islamic message) and the development of religious teachings, it has often been considered an active tool for the spread of radical Muslim views in Africa. Several of its offices are on the Eastern shores of the continent and on the islands (Comoros, Zanzibar, Pemba, Lamu). In their research of the African people's and communities' muslim roots, the Agency has often clashed with authorities in several countries, like Gabon, Senegal, Zimbabwe and Cameroon. Presently, the Agency runs agricultural projects in Mali, provides assistance to the Tuareg, offers scholarships, assists orphans and builds mosques. It can rely on a lot of money and this helps it spread its ideology. The Africa Muslims Agency has been suspected of financing the Somali Al Ittihad al Islamiyah, the radical group that was the forefather of the current Al Qaeda affiliated al Shabaab and then lead by Sheikh Hassan Dahir Aweys.