**Summary**

The Muslim Brotherhood sometimes appears to be moderate political organisation; the reality is far more sinister.

The organisation's flag features the Qur'an, symbolising its commitment to Sharia Law. Two crossed swords represent Jihad, holy war against infidels and apostates. Meanwhile, the words 'And prepare' are a reference to a surat in the Qur'an: *'And prepare against them whatever you are able of power and of steeds of war by which you may terrify the enemy of Allah and your enemy and others besides them whom you do not know [but] whom Allah knows*'. Around this is written: *'Allah is our objective; the Prophet is our leader; Qur’an is our law; Jihad is our way; Dying in the name of Allah is our greatest hope*'. The message could hardly be clearer.

This is an organisation that is unabashedly *Islamist*: for the Brotherhood, Islam is not merely a religion, but an all-encompassing ideology. In the words of its own Deputy Guide, Khairat al-Shater, the organisation's goal is: '*Restoring Islam and its all-encompassing conception; subjugating people to God; instituting the religion of God: the Islamisation of life, empowering of God’s religion; establishing the Nahda of the Ummah on the basis of Islam*'.

In other words, the goal is to restore an Islamic Caliphate under Sharia Law. The steady metamorphosis of the Arab ‘Spring’ into something much more sinister demonstrates what can happen when such Islamists are funded, encouraged and set loose. Liberal causes have been hijacked by extremists across Egypt, Libya, Tunisia and, of course, Syria, while Turkey shows even established democracies are not safe from Islamist influence.

It is understandable that Western governments are attracted to parties and movements who claim to represent the non-violent, moderate face of Islam. Hundreds of millions of Muslims in the Arab world and beyond abhor the violence committed in the name of their faith, and these people must be allowed to have a voice. But not all those who claim to speak for them have a genuine mandate to do so. Western observers are wrong to imagine Islamists are in the majority in the Muslim world; they are simply better-organised and united by a perverted ideology.

We must be especially cautious when organisations claiming to represent the people in fact have contempt for democracy as an ideal, aspiring instead to force all Muslims and even non-Muslims to submit to Sharia Law. The West has its own history of sectarian war and extremism, which culminated with the Nazis, so we should not be naïve about how such movements arise, why they gain support, and how to counter them.

To the Brotherhood, democracy is no more than a means to an end. They have exactly the kind of long-term political strategy that Western nations lack today. To take seriously its claims to be a moderate political movement is to play into its hands, as too many people across the Muslim world have already discovered.