

American Foreign Policy Council

UNITED STATES

QUICK FACTS

Population: 316,668,567

Area: 9,826,675 sq km

Ethnic Groups: white 79.96%, black 12.85%, Asian 4.43%, Amerindian and Alaskan native 0.97%, native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander 0.18%, two or more races 1.61% (a separate listing for Hispanic is not included

because the U.S. Census Bureau considers Hispanic to mean persons of Spanish/Hispanic/Latino origin including those of Mexican, Cuban, Puerto Rican, Dominican Republic, Spanish, and Central or South American origin living in the U.S. who may be of any race or ethnic group; about 15.1% of the total U.S. population is Hispanic)

Religions: Protestant 51.3%, Roman Catholic 23.9%, Mormon 1.7%, other Christian 1.6%, Jewish 1.7%, Buddhist 0.7%, Muslim 0.6%, other or unspecified 2.5%, unaffiliated 12.1%, none 4%

Government Type: Constitution-based federal republic; strong democratic tradition

GDP (official exchange rate): \$15.94 trillion

Map and Quick Facts courtesy of the CIA World Factbook (Last Updated September 2013)



The American public remains largely unaware of and/or uninterested in Islamist groups in the U.S., unless they can somehow be linked to al-Qaeda and/or terrorist attacks in the West. The largest terrorism financing case in American history—which prosecuted individuals and groups linked to Hamas in 2007-2008—attracted little media coverage and even less public interest at the time it was

taking place, despite the fairly explosive information that came out in the course of the trial about some of the most influential Islamic civil society groups active in the U.S. Several Islamist organizations have successfully framed themselves in the public discourse as “moderate,” “mainstream,” and representative American Muslim religious and civil rights organizations—an image that has allowed them to avoid widespread public distrust and condemn criticism as “Islamophobia.”

The U.S. government is, on the whole, only slightly more interested than the general public in the Islamist groups active within its borders. Due to official apathy and ignorance, civil society groups linked to the Muslim Brotherhood have, up until today, dominated governmental “outreach” to the American Muslim community. While the U.S. government’s relations with some groups have changed over the years, others remain active partners of various departments and agencies. U.S. law enforcement agencies, however, still aggressively target homegrown jihadist plots, as well as some civil society groups that fund and support proscribed groups such as Hamas and Hezbollah.

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ISLAMIST ACTIVITY

Contemporary Islamist activity in the United States can be understood in the context of five loose conceptual groupings:

The Ikhwan-Jama’at duopoly¹

The Ikhwan-Jama’at duopoly is the largest and most influential grouping of organized Islamist activism in the United States. In the 1950s and 1960s, Muslim Brotherhood activists fled repression in Egypt and sought refuge in Saudi Arabia. Wahhabi² authorities took advantage of their organizational experience, placing them in key positions at major Islamic quasi-NGOs. With Saudi backing, these Brotherhood activists, joined by *Jama’at-e Islami*³ cadres, propagated Islamist thought and institutions all over the world, including the United States and the wider Western world.⁴

The structure of the U.S.-based Ikhwan-Jama’at duopoly can be understood

on three levels: 1) *a covert vanguard*, 2) *professional activist organizations* with formalized membership schemes, and 3) the related *grassroots* they seek to mobilize. The vanguard consists of Brotherhood and Jama'at leaders in North America who hold key leadership positions in a network of overlapping activist organizations. These activist organizations are the most prominent Islamic groups in American civil society. They are influential in local, state, and national politics and have established relationships with editorial boards and news producers at media outlets throughout the country. The fact that they are linked to the Brotherhood and *Jama'at-Islami* is not commonly known, even though this information is readily available. This can perhaps be attributed to pervasive political correctness about matters concerning religion and ethnicity, as well as a related lack of interest from mainstream and credible media outlets.

Internal U.S. Brotherhood records released as evidence in the terrorism financing trial of the Holy Land Foundation for Relief and Development (HLF) reveal that a covert vanguard of Muslim Brotherhood activists founded and directed the most influential Muslim-American civil society groups in the United States, including the Muslim Students' Association (MSA) the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA), the North American Islamic Trust (NAIT), the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT), the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) and the Muslim American Society (MAS).⁵ The Islamic Circle of North America (ICNA) similarly is a "front" for *Jama'at-i-Islami*.⁶ The public faces of these groups are professionally-led activist organizations concerned with civil rights, religious education, political awareness, grass-roots organization, and other seemingly benign activities.⁷ However, internal Brotherhood documents reveal another side to these organizations.

The strategy of the Muslim Brotherhood in the West is carried out largely through front groups coordinated by the covert Brotherhood vanguard. In an effort to establish Islamic governance, the Brotherhood seeks to manipulate and subvert local power structures by positioning themselves as the gatekeepers to the Muslim community, infiltrating civil society and state structures, and creating parallel ones. In practice, this involves establishing close contacts with editorial boards of newspapers; news producers; prominent journalists; government, law enforcement, defense, and intelligence officials; prominent academics; civil society groups, such as the American Civil Liberties Union; and others.

An internal document of the Muslim Brotherhood network in the U.S. states that "the main goal of Islamic activism" is: "establishing the nation of Islam, the rule of God in the lives of humans, making people worship their Creator

and cleansing the earth from the tyrants who assault God's sovereignty, the abominators in His earth and the suppressors of His creation."⁸ Brotherhood officials have done so by promoting the creation of civic organizations with a covert—and occasionally an overt—political agenda, an activity described by one Brotherhood official in the 1980s as “energizing political work fronts.”⁹ Such groups include:

The Muslim Student Association (MSA). Founded in 1963 by Brotherhood activists at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, the MSA, or MSA National, served as a coordinating committee for Brotherhood activities during the organization's formative years in the United States. During this early era, all Brotherhood activists in the U.S. had to be active in the MSA.¹⁰ Now a national organization, the MSA has about 150 affiliated university chapters in the United States and Canada, including numerous Ivy League affiliations.¹¹ In the U.S., the MSA is divided into East Zone, Central Zone, and West Zone. It is a 501(c)4 tax exempt organization, and claims to refuse foreign funding.¹²

Like all member organizations of the Ikhwan-Jama'at duopoly, the MSA proclaims “moderation,” but public statements by MSA activists reveal an Islamist agenda and ideology. For instance, MSA officials have espoused the desire “to restore Islam to the leadership of society” and to be working toward “the reestablishment of the Islamic form of government.”¹³ They have likewise emphasized the importance of *dawah* (propagation of faith) as a vehicle for the spread of Islam in the United States, with the ultimate goal of making America “a Muslim country.”¹⁴

The North American Islamic Trust (NAIT). NAIT was founded in 1973 as a waqf (trust) for the MSA and other Islamic institutions, including the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA).¹⁵ NAIT is a non-profit 501(c)3 and holds the titles to hundreds of Islamic institutions—including mosques and schools—across the U.S., making it, according to some analysts, a holding company and financial hub for various Muslim Brotherhood-tied groups in North America.¹⁶ It also manages the Iman Fund, a no-load mutual fund, and runs American Trust Publications (which publishes Islamic literature, including the works of Brotherhood luminary Yusuf al Qaradawi¹⁷) and the Islamic Book Service.¹⁸ A 1987 FBI investigation of NAIT concluded that the organization supported the “Islamic Revolution.” “Their support of JIHAD (a holy war) in the U.S. has been evidenced by the financial and organizational support provided through NAIT from Middle East countries to Muslims residing in the U.S. and Canada,” it continued. The countries named as providing this support were Iran, Libya, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia. “The organiza-

tional support provided by NAIT includes planning, organizing, and funding anti-U.S. and anti-Israel demonstrations, pro-PLO demonstrations and the distribution of political propaganda against U.S. policies in the Middle East and in support of the Islamic Revolution as advocated by the [Government of Iran]. NAIT also supports the recruitment, training and funding of black Muslims in the U.S. who support the Islamic Revolution.”¹⁹

The Islamic Society of North America (ISNA). ISNA, which emerged out of the MSA in 1981, was named as an unindicted co-conspirator in the Hamas financing trial against the Holy Land Foundation.²⁰ Like NAIT, ISNA is included among the “individuals/entities who are and/or were members of the US Muslim Brotherhood.”²¹

There is no evidence that ISNA currently provides material support to terrorist organizations. However, to this day, key U.S. Brotherhood activists hold leadership positions in ISNA. ISNA’s nineteen member board of directors includes the chairman of NAIT, the president of the MSA, and the heads of ISNA’s other “constituent organizations:” the Association of Muslim Scientists and Engineers, the Islamic Medical Association of North America, the Canadian Islamic Trust, Muslim Youth of North America, and the Council of Islamic Schools of North America—some of which are explicitly named as Brotherhood-allied groups in internal Brotherhood documents.²²

The Islamic Circle of North America (ICNA). ICNA is the successor to the Pakistani-American organization *Halaqa Abbabe Islami*, which sought to recruit “Islamic movement oriented Urdu speaking Muslims and to strengthen the Jama’at-e-Islami Pakistan.”²³ In 1977, *Halaqa Abbabe Islami* formally changed its name to ICNA.²⁴ Today, ICNA holds conferences throughout the U.S. and states that “by focusing on self-development, education, outreach and social services, ICNA has cemented its place as a leading grassroots organization in the American Muslim community.”²⁵

ICNA has three separate wings: the ICNA Sisters Wing, Young Muslims Sisters and Young Muslims Brothers.²⁶ It also runs the New York-based Islamic Learning Foundation, which is aimed at “enriching the lives of Muslims in general and Muslim Youth in particular by educating their minds and affecting their hearts with sound knowledge of Islamic Shariah.”²⁷ Notably, these steps are in keeping with the strategy of Abdul A’la Maududi, the founder of *Jama’at-e-Islami*. In his book *The Process of Islamic Revolution*, Maududi calls for indoctrinated Islamic cadres as a foundation for revolution. To Maududi, the Islamic state begins with good Muslims, who would in turn create a “system of education to train and mould the masses in the Islamic pattern of life.”²⁸

The Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR). The idea for CAIR emerged out of a 1993 meeting in Philadelphia of the Muslim Brotherhood's Palestine Committee in the United States. Participants spoke of the need for a lobbying and public affairs group to promote the Islamist point of view in the U.S. The short-term goal was to serve as a spoiler for the Oslo Accords, but the long-term goal was to manipulate the public discourse in America on issues related to Islam and the Muslim world.²⁹ Three IAP officials founded CAIR several months later. CAIR portrays itself as a civil rights group, and has since become the most influential and pervasive Muslim civil society group in the United States.³¹ They have been heavily involved in "sensitivity training" and other briefings on Islam and the Muslim community for U.S. law enforcement officers. However, in 2008, CAIR came under both suspicion and scrutiny as a result of the Holy Land Foundation case, in which Ghassan Elashi, the chairman of the Holy Land Foundation charity in Dallas and a board member of the Texas chapter of CAIR, was found guilty of conspiring to funnel funds to Hamas.³¹ CAIR is currently led by a seven-person board.³²

The Muslim American Society (MAS). The Northern Virginia-based MAS was founded in 1993. Among its founding members was Ahmed Elkadi, who supposedly led the Brotherhood in the U.S. from 1984 to 1994.³³ Mohammad Mehdi Akef, the Supreme Guide of the global Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt from 2004 to 2010, claims to have played a role in founding MAS in a push for more "openness" in the Brotherhood's activities in the U.S.³⁴ MAS is open about its lineage in the U.S., lauding older Brotherhood-affiliated groups such as MSA, ISNA, and NAIT.³⁵

MAS claims to promote understanding between Muslims and non-Muslims, and its mission is "to move people to strive for God consciousness, liberty, and justice, and to convey Islam with utmost clarity."³⁶ The MAS Freedom Foundation is perhaps the most active and public part of the organization. It engages in and coordinates grassroots activism, including voter registration, civil rights work, lobbying Congress, and protesting.³⁷ Other departments include the Council of Imams (coordinated with ICNA), the National Council of Islamic Centers (also coordinated with ICNA), the Tarbiyya (religious educational) program, the *dawah* (propagation) program, Islamic American University, and the Muslim Youth Program.³⁸

The International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT). Conceived at a 1977 Islamic conference in Lugano, Switzerland, IIIT was founded four years later in Pennsylvania as "a private, non-profit, academic, cultural and edu-

cational institution, concerned with general issues of Islamic thought and education.”³⁹ It is now based in Herndon, Virginia. IIIT ostensibly “promotes academic research on the methodology and philosophy of various disciplines, and gives special emphasis to the development of Islamic scholarship in contemporary social sciences.”⁴⁰ However, IIIT has been accused by the U.S. government of contributing funds to the World and Islam Studies Enterprise (WISE), which was founded to support the Palestinian Islamic Jihad terrorist organization.⁴¹ IIIT is a part of a network of companies and not-for-profit organizations based in Northern Virginia known as the SAAR Network or the Safa Group, which has been under investigation by the U.S. Justice Department since at least 2003.⁴² In May 2009, Ishaq Farhan, a trustee of IIIT, was chosen to head the Islamic Action Front—the political party of the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood—a post he had held before.⁴³ Farhan had long been associated with the IAF and is said to be one of the key figures behind its formation.⁴⁴ (Since then, Farhan has been replaced as head of the IAF by Hamza Mansour.⁴⁵ Ostensibly, however, Farhan still retains an affiliation—and a position of prominence—with the organization.)

Jama'at al Fuqra

Jama'at al Fuqra (JF, Arabic for “Community of the Impoverished”) was founded in New York in 1980 by the Pakistani religious leader, Sheikh Mubarak Ali Gilani.⁴⁶ JF has been described as a splinter group of Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM).⁴⁷ Daniel Pearl, the late *Wall Street Journal* reporter, was on his way to interview Gilani in 2002 when he was kidnapped in Pakistan and subsequently beheaded.

In the U.S., JF is a loosely structured movement primarily composed of African-American converts to Islam. JF functions officially through Muslims of the Americas, a non-profit organization, and the International Quranic Open University.⁴⁸ JF also operates a news publication called *The Islamic Post*.⁴⁹ JF runs a network of rural compounds in New York, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Arizona, Oregon, South Carolina, California and Colorado. Members of the group were involved in a wave of violent crime and fraud—including murder and arson—in the 1980s and 1990s.⁵⁰ Some members have also been known to attack Hindu places of worship.⁵¹ Over the past decade, the group has been fairly quiet in the U.S. It received some attention in 2008 and 2009 as a result of a documentary on the group produced by the controversial Christian Action Network entitled *Homegrown Jihad*.⁵²

Hizb ut-Tahrir

Hizb ut-Tahrir in America (HTA) has been led by Middle Eastern activists who moved to the U.S. in the 1980s. For most of its history, it has met with little success in expanding its native activist base. This has been

attributed to competition from other Islamist groups (mainly the Brotherhood); the limited ability of an older leadership to connect with the younger generation; and a level of paranoia and secrecy among the leadership that have limited outreach efforts, hindered online interaction, and may have turned off potential recruits – particularly in the pre-9/11 era.⁵³

The HTA website states that the organization's aim is "to resume the Islamic way of life and to convey the Islamic *da'wah* to the world."⁵⁴ HTA is currently well-networked and connected with the larger global presence of HuT. Their three-stage methodology for taking power is the same as that promoted by the global movement:

- The First Stage: The stage of culturing to produce people who believe in the idea and the method of the Party, so that they form the Party group.
- The Second Stage: The stage of interaction with the Ummah (global-Muslim community), to let the *Ummah* embrace and carry Islam, so that the Ummah takes it up as its issue, and thus works to establish it in the affairs of life.
- The Third Stage: The stage of establishing government, implementing Islam generally and comprehensively, and carrying it as a message to the world.⁵⁵

In the West, HuT seeks to foster a mass movement toward revolution, while in Muslim-majority countries it attempts to recruit members of the military for the purpose of carrying out a military coup.⁵⁶ According to one specialist, HTA "counts well-educated professionals who are influential in their communities among their members" and in recent years the group has expanded beyond their main hubs of activity in New York, Orange County (California), Chicago, and Milwaukee.⁵⁷

The jihadist-activist milieu

There are a number of small U.S.-based formal and informal groups and networks that support violent *jihad* in America and elsewhere, but do not necessarily engage in it themselves. Most of their activities are political and social in nature, consisting of provocative public statements and demonstrations. Two particularly prominent groups deserve mention in this regard.

Al Muhajiroun is a Britain-based Islamist movement founded in 1996 by former HuT activist Omar Bakri Mohammad. The Islamic Thinkers Society, or

ITS, is the New York-based U.S. branch of *al-Muhajiroun*. The organization's objective is "to resume the Islamic way of life which will fulfil the purpose of the aim... to bring back the apparatus that was destroyed in 1924, i.e. Khilafah."⁵⁸ Like HuT, *al-Muhajiroun* is opposed to democracy, free-market capitalism, and secular governance. However, *al-Muhajiroun's* ideology differs from HuT's on a few crucial issues. The latter limits its efforts to establish the Caliphate to select countries where it believes it will be more successful. *Al-Muhajiroun*, by contrast, insists that Muslims everywhere should strive to establish the Caliphate wherever they live. *Al-Muhajiroun* also prescribes a more aggressive public approach through demonstrations, marches, and public outreach, while HuT is more insular.⁵⁹

ITS's activities primarily consist of aggressive pamphleteering and provocative demonstrations in which they call for the implementation of Islamic law globally—including in the United States—and condemn those they view as enemies of Islam. They also condemn Islamic scholars who do not conform to their interpretation of Islam.⁶⁰ According to a 2008 report by New York Police Department, ITS is largely made up of 2nd and 3rd generation young Muslim-Americans of South Asian and Middle Eastern background. The report describes ITS and likeminded groups as "indoctrination accelerants due to their ability to act as both incubators and proliferators of radicalization."⁶¹ ITS' methodology largely promotes non-violent means for change, such as conferences, lectures, demonstrations, marches, rallies, and strikes; however, it also calls for "the physical action of the Muslims in the army who had pledged their support beforehand... and the authority to Muslims to appoint a leader... to implement the whole of Islam immediately, comprehensively, and exclusively."⁶²

Revolution Muslim is another New York-based *jihadist*-activist group. Founded in 2007 "to invite people to proper Islam... and command the good... while forbidding the falsehood," RM's mission "is to one day see the Muslims united under one Khalifah and under the commands of Allah."⁶³ RM sometimes cooperates with ITS. RM maintains an active blog and website, which serves as a forum for a dissemination of its views, proselytization, condemnation of U.S. policies, and even support for violence. For example, RM has expressed admiration for Major Nidal Malik Hasan, who was responsible for the shooting at Fort Hood (see below), and called his victims "slain terrorists."⁶⁴ According to the Anti-Defamation League, RM's non-virtual activities primarily consist of pamphleteering and demonstrating outside mosques on Fridays.⁶⁵

Homegrown jihadist cells and networks

A number of Islamist terrorist plots in the U.S. have been thwarted or un-

covered in recent years. Many of these were planned by cells of Muslims who were either born in the U.S. or lived there for many years. There were also episodes of Americans planning attacks against U.S. interests abroad and/or going to fight with foreign Islamist movements. These included:

- In May 2009, James Cromitie, David Williams, Onta Williams, and Laguerre Payen were arrested in New York and charged with conspiring to bomb synagogues in the Bronx and shoot down military aircraft at the New York Air National Guard Base at Stewart Airport in Newburgh, New York with a surface-to-air missile.⁶⁶
- David Coleman Headley (AKA Daood Gilani) of Chicago was accused of providing crucial assistance for the 2008 Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) attack in Mumbai, India. Headley allegedly attended LeT training camps in 2002 and 2003. Beginning in 2006, Headley allegedly carried out extensive surveillance of possible targets in Mumbai on behalf of LeT. He was charged with aiding and abetting the murders of six U.S. citizens who were killed in the Mumbai attack. Headley was also accused of conspiring with LeT members and Ilyas Kashmiri, the head of the Kashmiri militant group Harakat ul Jihad al Islami (HUJI), to carry out attacks in Denmark against *Jyllands Posten*, the newspaper that published the Mohammad cartoons that led to the 2006 Danish Cartoons Crisis. Headley allegedly carried out surveillance in Denmark for that planned attack.⁶⁷ Headley was ultimately sentenced to 35 years in prison, a relatively lenient punishment due to his cooperation in providing intelligence on terrorist networks.⁶⁸
- Najibullah Zazi, who drove an airport shuttle bus in Denver and, before that, lived in Queens, has been accused of conspiring to use explosives in an attack thought to have been planned for New York City in 2009. Zazi was born in Afghanistan and raised in Pakistan. Zazi is thought to have travelled to the Federally Administered Tribal Areas in Pakistan where he received training from al-Qaeda.⁶⁹ Zazi pled guilty in 2010.⁷⁰
- Bryant Neal Vinas, an American convert to Islam, was charged with participating in and supporting terrorist attacks against U.S. persons and facilities in Afghanistan in 2008. He was accused of firing rockets at a U.S. military base in Afghanistan and providing “expert advice and assistance” to al-Qaeda about the New York transit system and Long Island Railroad.⁷¹ He pled guilty to all charges in 2009.⁷²

- Daniel P. Boyd, an American convert to Islam, was accused in 2009 of heading a seven-man North Carolina-based cell that allegedly planned to provide material support to al-Qaeda, murder, kidnap, maim and injure persons in Israel and elsewhere, and kill U.S. military personnel stationed at Quantico, Virginia.⁷³ Boyd pleaded guilty to conspiracy to commit murder and conspiracy to provide material support to terrorists in U.S. District Court in February 2001, and subsequently cooperated with the government, providing testimony at trial against several of his co-conspirators, who were convicted that October.⁷⁴
- Hosam Maher Husein Smadi, a Jordanian national, was found guilty of planning to blow up the Fountain Place office complex in downtown Dallas with a vehicle bomb in 2009 and in 2010 was sentenced to twenty-four years in prison.⁷⁵ He also reportedly considered attacking a National Guard Armory and the Dallas Airport.⁷⁶
- In August 2013, a U.S. citizen and a foreign national were charged in a Miami court with providing financing and recruits to al-Qaeda and two other designated other foreign terrorist organizations. Gufran Ahmed Kauser Mohammed, a naturalized U.S. citizen born in India, and Mohamed Hussein Said, a Kenyan, were brought up on a fifteen count indictment after being arrested in Saudi Arabia and transferred to the U.S. The two men allegedly wired a total of \$96,000 to an al-Qaeda affiliate in Syria, the al Nusra Front (also known as Jabhat al-Nusra), and to al Shabaab in Somalia.⁷⁷

There was also a “lone wolf” Islamist terrorist attack launched at Fort Hood, Texas on November 5, 2011 by Major Nidal Malik Hasan, a U.S. Army psychiatrist, who had been in regular contact with Anwar al-Awlaki, an American-born *imam* of Yemeni descent who served as one of al-Qaeda’s main ideologues before his death in September 2011 as a result of an American drone strike. Hasan opened fire on base, killing thirteen people and wounding 31 others. Hasan was shot multiple times, but survived.⁷⁸ In August 2013, Hasan was unanimously convicted by a jury of army officers.⁷⁹ Hasan’s defense lawyer asked the judge to spare Hasan’s life, but the request was denied and Hasan is to die by lethal injection.⁸⁰ The Department of Defense and White House have declined to classify Hasan as a terrorist, however, instead labeling the Fort Hood incident as a case of workplace violence.⁸¹ Numerous Members of Congress have objected this description, asserting that the attack was clearly one of “homegrown terror[ism]” and urging the U.S. government to recognize this fact.⁸²

ISLAMISM AND SOCIETY

The U.S. has the most diverse Muslim population in the Western world—indeed, maybe in the entire world. America is estimated to have 2 to 3 million Muslims who come from many different countries and identify with different sects of Islam. Sixty percent of native-born U.S. Muslims identify themselves as Sunnis, 5 percent as Shi'a, and 24 percent as having no specific affiliation (describing themselves as “just a Muslim”). Among foreign-born Muslims, 68 percent identify as Sunnis, 14 percent as Shi'a, and 10 percent as non-specific. Twenty percent are converts to Islam.⁸³ A large proportion of Muslims in the U.S. are first generation immigrants (63 percent), and 37 percent are native-born, with 15 percent being second generation.⁸⁴ Foreign-born Muslim Americans have come from at least 77 different countries. Twenty-six percent of Muslim immigrants to the United States come from the Arab world (Middle East and North Africa), 9 percent from Pakistan, 7 percent from other South Asian countries (including Pakistan, India, Bangladesh and Afghanistan), 3 percent come from Iran, 5 percent come from Europe, and 7 percent come from Sub-Saharan Africa. One-third of all Muslim immigrants came to the U.S. during the 1990s and 40 percent have come after 2000. Over three-quarters (81 percent) of all Muslim-Americans are U.S. citizens.⁸⁵ At 30 percent, whites make up the largest proportion of Muslims in America.⁸⁶ Muslims in America, as a group, are younger than other major religious groups in the U.S.⁸⁷

The extent to which Muslim-Americans support U.S. Islamist organizations and movements is unclear and contentious. It does seem evident that support for al-Qaeda remains low, but significant enough. While only five percent of Muslim Americans expressed a somewhat favorable view of al-Qaeda, that still means 125,000 people (assuming a Muslim-American population of 2.5 million).⁸⁸ As far as support for other Islamist groups is concerned, no reliable polling or studies have been carried out on the subject to date. While information on the membership levels of some groups—particularly CAIR—has made it into the public domain, some of it must be viewed with scepticism given the nature of the sources. Claims of foreign funding for Ikwhan-Jama'at groups are pervasive. While there are some examples of such funding available in the public domain, there has not been a comprehensive investigation or account of this issue that has been made public.

The fact that the most influential and well-resourced Muslim-American civil society groups are, in a very concrete sense, affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood and *Jama'at-e-Islami* is not widely held knowledge. While “anti-Islamist” groups do exist—mostly on the right side of the American political spectrum—their efforts to call attention to U.S. net-

works tied to the Muslim Brotherhood and Jama'at-e-Islami have not gained much traction, and are often dismissed, particularly on the left, as “Islamophobic” in nature. This is partially because Islamist organizations have successfully framed themselves as “moderate,” “mainstream,” and representative American Muslim religious and civil rights organizations. This has allowed them to avoid widespread public distrust and frame criticism of them as “Islamophobia” targeting the Muslim-American community rather than criticism of the organizations themselves.

However, anti-Islamist groups have experienced some victories. For example, as a result of the revelations of the 2009 Hamas-financing trial of the Holy Land Foundation and the ensuing pressures from the aforementioned anti-Islamist groups and some members of the House and Senate, the FBI ceased its cooperation with CAIR.⁸⁹ Despite this step forward, it seems that ISNA is among those groups that have seen their influence increase as they step into the vacuum left by CAIR and assume a larger role in advising and training U.S. government and military officials.⁹⁰

ISLAMISM AND THE STATE

The relationship between the U.S. government and Islamist groups can only be described as schizophrenic. There does not seem to be any detailed U.S. government policy on choosing appropriate partners in the Muslim community. As a result, we have seen parts of the U.S. government working with Islamist groups for community outreach and security service recruitment while other parts of the government—often in the same executive department—have investigated and prosecuted the *same groups* for a wide variety of suspected criminal activity, including financial crimes and material support of proscribed terrorist organizations.

In December 2009, Daniel Benjamin, then the State Department’s Coordinator for Counterterrorism, announced a policy called Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) that seems to share some similarities with Britain’s Preventing Violent Extremism strategy. Benjamin explained at the time that CVE would “focus on local communities most prone to radicalization,” “address underlying conditions for at-risk populations,” and “improve the ability of moderates to voice their views and strengthen opposition to violence.” Benjamin likewise explained that “a tailored-approach to CVE requires identifying which of these problems are driving radicalization and are amenable to change with the help of local governments and leaders who understand the problems best.”⁹¹ CVE, which now operates under the aegis of the Department of Homeland Security, is considered an important component of President Obama’s 2011 *National Strategy on Empowering Local*

Partners to Prevent Violent Extremism. Internationally, CVE collaborates with partners in the UK, the Netherlands, Germany, Canada, Belgium, Spain, Denmark, and Australia, and with international law enforcement organizations such as Europol.⁹² It should be noted, however, that in Britain, the implementation of such an approach has empowered local authorities and funded various Muslim community organizations—including many Islamist and Salafist organizations—to engage with Muslim youth.

ENDNOTES

¹ This term was coined in Kalim Siddiqui, *Stages of Islamic Revolution* (London: The Open Press, 1996). It refers to groups tied to the Muslim Brotherhood (Al-Ikhwan al-Muslimeen) and the Pakistani Islamist party, Jama'at al-Islami.

² Wahhabi here is understood as the Saudi brand of Salafism, which is a movement within Islam that seeks to practice Islam in the fashion of the pious ancestors – namely the Prophet Muhammad and his Companions. Wahhabism derives from Muhammad ibn abd al Wahhab, who introduced a form of Salafism to the Arabian peninsula in alliance with the House of Saud in the early 20th Century.

³ Jama'at-e Islami is a Pakistani Islamist party founded in 1941 by Syed Abul A'ala Maududi, who was perhaps the most influential Islamist thinker of the 20th Century.

⁴ Giles Kepel, *The War for Muslim Minds: Islam and the West* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2006); Lorenzo Vidino, *The New Western Brothers* (New York: Columbia University Press, forthcoming 2010); Lorenzo Vidino, "Aims and Methods of Europe's Muslim Brotherhood," *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology* 4 (2006); Allison Pargeter, *The New Frontiers of Jihad: Radical Islam in Europe* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 20.

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