The History and Structure of Islamic Organizations in America

European Eye on Radicalization

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The Immigration and Nationality Act (INA), which entered into force in the United States on 3 October 1965, marked the beginning of a major shift in the history of Muslims in American society, changing the nature, role, scope, and diversity of Muslim organizations in the country.

The 1965 Act removed restrictions imposed by previous immigration laws, the first in 1923 and the second in 1946, that had sought to keep the balance of between the various national and ethnic groups in the U.S. stable. For example, if the number of citizens of German origin were 10% American population, the percentage of newcomers from Germany allowed to receive citizenship was not permitted to exceed this percentage of the total each year. Since the percentage of American citizens from all Muslim-majority countries was at or around zero, immigration to the U.S. and acquiring its citizenship, whether through family reunification or through regular immigration, was nearly impossible, especially from the Indian Subcontinent.[1]

With the passage of the 1965 INA, hundreds of thousands of Muslims from India, Pakistan, and elsewhere in Southeast Asia, as well as from the Arab world, poured into America. More than half of the annual immigrants to the U.S. in the 1950s came from northern Europe, while the percentage of all those coming from Asia did not exceed 6%. At the end of the 1990s, the percentage of European immigrants fell to 16%, and those from Asia rose to 31%.[2]

The Muslim Students Association (MSA) had been founded in 1963 with the intention of “preparing” Arab and Muslim students at U.S. universities to return to their homelands in the Mashreq—the area of the Middle East that is east of Egypt—after completing their studies. MSA focused on those students who seemed likely to become wealthy and powerful at home in the hopes that they would ultimately become active members of the Muslim Brotherhood. Later in the 1960s, after the 1965 Act, these students began to consider staying in the U.S., bringing their families from the Mashreq, and using their skills in medicine, engineering, and various sciences to find a job in the American labour market. This bet on the American dream by an increasing number of Arabs and Muslims was aided and encouraged by the change in the political and social climate in the U.S. in the 1970s after the success of civil rights movement on the one hand, and the dreary economic and socio-political conditions in the Islamic Mashreq countries.[3]
As the students changed, so did the role of MSA and its affiliates. MSA had begun with the mission to recruit among the expatriates to send back quality cadres to the Muslim Brotherhood in the Arab world and Jamaat-e-Islami in Pakistan so that these Islamist movements had the human capital to run the state if and when the Islamist revolution of their dream arrived. Now the students were not going home. MSA switched to trying to preserve an Islamic identity among the students who stayed in America, including doctrines of the faith itself, but not limited to that. Islamic culture and Islamist “morality” were inculcated among Muslims in America, and MSA then started trying to change America, to have the state and society accommodate itself to visible manifestations of Islam, such as the hijab and the beard, for example. MSA particularly targeted the American elite with its influence campaigns, and expanded them beyond religious toleration for Muslims in America to agitating to U.S. administrations and congressmen on behalf of specific geopolitical causes, most notably the Palestinians and the Pakistani-sponsored Islamist militants in Kashmir.

The Muslim Brotherhood and Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan cadres who founded MSA more than half a century ago have obviously long since passed from the scene, and the organization they founded has also considerably changed in that period to meet the evolving reality, needs, and
objectives of the Islamists. MSA has also become one among many such groups, whereas it started out almost alone. These groups have gone through roughly three stages: first focused on student activities, then focused on social and professional organizations, and finally they moved to establish political organizations that serve their goals in North America, as well as their goal of using American political power to serve the goals of their political groups in their former homelands in the Mashreq.

**The Institutional Development of the Key Islamist Organizations in America**

To achieve these renewed and expanding goals, new organizations have been established by former MSA leaders, who came to hold privileged positions in American society — doctors, engineers, scientists, university professors, etc. These organizations proliferated, and fall into two broad kinds: social and political.

**Social Organizations**

These are principally aimed at achieving social and cultural goals to serve Muslims in North America. This does not mean that they do not play a political role, only that such a role is secondary.

**Islamic Society of North America (ISNA)**

Established by leaders of MSA in Indiana in 1982, ISNA was a natural development of MSA due to the new developments regarding immigration conditions, which allowed families to be brought to the U.S. and transitioned MSA’s operatives from expatriates to immigrants. ISNA served as a cover for the transfer of MSA’s activities outside the university.

This was not a new idea; it was largely an extension of the idea of the Federation of Islamic Associations (FIA) established in 1953, but the FIA had faded over time as the dominant societal and political vision of Muslims in America changed, guided by the MSA founders.[4]
ISNA’s objectives are primarily religious and social. It aims to educate Muslims and strengthen their connection to their religion, despite their presence in an advanced, secular Western society, as well as playing a social role related to creating bonds among families and generations, where its annual conferences provide an opportunity for acquaintance and marriage among the community.

However, ISNA has also developed a political role, where it is keen to create an association that brings together Muslims in North America regardless of their previous homelands, races and creeds, in order to create a unity that enables them to have a real political weight in the American society. For that purpose, ISNA established the Jurisprudence Council of North America to create the impression that Islam had a unified voice and there was address—namely theirs—where American politicians could interface with it. This council issued fatwas against terrorism after 9/11.[5]

Despite its condemnation of Al-Qaeda, ISNA has continued to hold to the ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood. The March/April 1999 issue of its monthly magazine, Islamic Horizons, featured a photograph of Hassan al-Banna, the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, whose character and ideology were the focus of the issue. In addition, a publishing house belonging to ISNA distributed a translation of Sayyid Qutb’s seminal book, Milestones Along the Way, which has been crucial in the development of Islamist militancy.[6] The ISNA leaders, themselves Muslim Brothers or Jamaat-e-Islami members, had been keen to affiliate their organization with these two parent groups in the Islamic Mashreq—until 9/11, after which a major shift began to take place.

The election of Dr. Ingrid Mattson, as the first woman, and first white, nonimmigrant American, to lead ISNA in 2006, was a major turning point in the development of this organization. Mattson holds a PhD in Islamic jurisprudence and history from Chicago University. She had, and exercised, great freedom to critique Islamic jurisprudence—concluding that the Islamic jurists were biased towards societal forces, rather than the purposes of Islam, on the question of slavery, amongst other things.

Dr. Mattson had been a Catholic, and embraced Islam on what she considered a rational basis. Hence, she became a model for Muslims trying to answer the question posed by the famous Catholic professor John Esposito—one of the most vocal supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood in the Western academia—“Can a Muslim lead an Islamic life in a non-Muslim country?”.[7] The answer was embodied in the character of Ingrid Mattson, so many non-Muslim American scholars came to believe.[8] Under Mattson’s leadership, ISNA underwent fundamental change—in terms of its topics of interest, involvement in American society, and approach to major problems.[9]

Islamic Circle of North America (ICNA)

ICNA is another offshoot of MSA. It was established by the Jamaat-e-Islami wing within MSA in 1971, and then evolved into a miniature version of ISNA, playing the same roles and organizing the same events.[10]

Where ICNA differs from ISNA is that its doctrine is closer to Salafism, whereas ISNA is viewed as more “modern” and open to a broader spectrum of Islamic currents. ICNA declares itself primarily concerned with dawa (proselytization) based on the approach of al-salaf al-salih (the pious
ancestors). This missionary work is achieved through, inter alia, seminars that preach ICNA’s interpretation of the Qur’an.[11]

The organization has undergone major changes since the 1990s, weakening its ties to Jamaat-e-Islami in Pakistan and abandoning Urdu as the language of speech, preaching, dialogue, and conferences. ICNA conferences have been opened up to all comers and are now delivered in English.

**Muslim American Society (MAS)**

A group of Arab immigrants belonging to the Muslim Brotherhood established MAS in 1992. MAS is very similar to ICNA, with a focus on preserving the most exclusionary versions of Muslim custom and practice, a serious hindrance to integration in the New World. Over time, the two became virtually indistinguishable, holding joint annual conferences—one the ICNA-MAS conference, and the other the MAS-ICNA conference, with only the leader logistician of the event altered in each case. In 2000, MAS established an open university with a distance education system called the Islamic American University; the first president was Dr. Salah Sultan, an Egyptian Brotherhood leader.[12]

**The Universal Muslim Association of America (UMAA)**

UMAA was established in 2002 in the U.S. and belongs to the Twelver Shi‘i branch of Islam. It represents the Shi’a version of the ICNA and MAS.

**Political Organizations**

The political groupings also minister to the Muslim minority in the U.S., but they are more closely intertwined with their parent branches, the Mashreq-based Muslim Brotherhood and Jamaat-e-Islami. These organizations have overlapping priorities that do little to distinguish between the aims of their parent organizations in the foreign countries where they are based, and the needs of American Muslims, who are mobilized to influence U.S. foreign policy according to what the parent groups in the Mashreq want.
**Muslim Public Affairs Council (MPAC)**

MPAC was established in 1988 by the leaders of the Islamic Center of Southern California, an outfit run by one of the most highly skilled and intelligent American Muslim leaders there has been, Dr. Hassan Hathout, alongside his brother, Dr. Maher Hathout, and their colleague, Dr. Al-Alfi, who later dedicated part of his own money to create the chair occupied by Dr. Khaled Abu Fadl, a vocal critic of Salafism/Wahhabism. The council was launched as a means through which Muslims could enrich American political and cultural life.[13]

MPAC is the only major American Muslim political organization that is organizationally and intellectually independent of the Islamist groups in the Mashreq. It tried to integrate Muslims into American political life, build bridges between Muslim communities in America and their state institutions, and organized many events to achieve these goals. Scholars of American Islamic organizations see it as a model for an Islamic organization that embraces American liberal values. But unfortunately, it did not achieve the expected success due to the domination of the political scene by Islamist groups with connections to the Mashreq.[14]

**American Muslim Council (AMC)**

AMC was founded in 1990 by some of the first leaders of the MSA, prominent among them Abdul Rahman Al-Amoudi, a man of Eritrean origin, who played a prominent role in interfacing with the U.S. establishment, serving as an adviser to the U.S. State Department on Arab world matters after the 11
September 2001 massacre. Al-Amoudi is currently in prison after being convicted of conspiring with fallen Libyan dictator Muammar Gaddafi to hire two Al-Qaeda operatives in Britain to assassinate the then-Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah bin Abdul Aziz.

While AMC had succeeded in attracting some of the most important Muslim minds in the U.S. from all backgrounds, such as Dr. Ali Mazrouei, a Kenyan-American political scientist, and Dr. Robert Crane, an American Muslim who served as an adviser to former U.S. President Richard Nixon, Al-Amoudi’s involvement in an international assassination conspiracy caused something of a stir and AMC in its original format was terminated in 2009.[15]

AMC had among its goals raising awareness of, and political engagement among, American Muslims, and it achieved remarkable success on both fronts. It was largely due to AMC that the opening of Congress now includes Islamic prayers, with the first invocation in the House of Representatives delivered in 1991 by the African-American preacher Siraj Wahhaj, a former vice-president of ISNA, and AMC lobbying was also instrumental in the fact that, since 1996, the White House has been calling on Muslims to celebrate Eid al-Fitr.[16]

American Muslim Alliance (AMA)

AMA was founded by Agha Saeed, a Pakistani professor, in Northern California in 1994. It aimed to mobilize Muslims in the U.S. electorate, sometimes on single issues—such as opposition to the PATRIOT Act after 9/11—and otherwise more generally, encouraging them to participate in elections, which AMA was particularly successful at in 2000 and 2004. AMA dissolved after its founder was imprisoned for financial fraud and forgery in obtaining U.S. citizenship.[17]

Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR)

CAIR is one of the most prominent Islamist organizations in the U.S., though it has, since its founding in 1994, presented itself as a “civil rights” organization. Established in Washington, D.C., CAIR on paper is a lobby group designed to defend the rights of Muslims and Arabs against discrimination and racism. This presentation has garnered support from not only Muslims, but the political Left, young people, and others who have taken up the cause of anti-Islamophobia in the wake of 9/11.[18] But the reality is that CAIR uses the (genuine) struggles that Muslims face in America to foster alienation that prevents assimilation and allows them to spread their Islamist ideas.

Some of the CAIR’s most dynamic leaders belonged to the Muslim Brotherhood; the legacy of this founding means that CAIR has a natural reach into the American-Muslim community, since the Brotherhood founded so many of the original Muslim groups, and CAIR has used this position to mobilize on behalf of Brotherhood causes globally.

This duality of CAIR will remain for as long as the Brotherhood remains in its leadership, but there are signs that a younger generation of leaders is emerging—coming from second- and third-generation American Muslims—that will “localize” CAIR in a true sense, focusing on the needs of American Muslims and abandoning the international program that has led to
CAIR clashing with the Arab governments it is trying to subvert. One sign of CAIR’s changing direction, albeit superficial for now, is the appointment of a Jewish executive director for one of its main branches.[19]

American Muslim Political Coordination Council (AMPCC)

AMPCC was created in 1998, modeled on the coordinating councils of Jewish organizations, to coordinate the Islamic political organizations: AMA, AMC, MPAC, and CAIR.[20]

American Muslim Task Force (AMT)

Established in 2004, AMT is a coordination for Islamist organizations that are tied in to the Muslim Brotherhood network in America.[21]

In Sum

The landscape of Islamic organizations in the U.S. over a half-century has undergone many developments and changes, corresponding to the changing reality of Islam and Muslims in America: there was one mosque in America in 1915, built by Albanian Muslims in Biddeford, Maine, in the far northeast of the country; a century later, in 2011, there were 2,106 mosques.[22] When the idea of institutional Muslim action took hold, the Muslim community was small and composed of recent immigrants; it was easy for organizations belonging to the Muslim Brotherhood and Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan to dominate the discourse. Though the legacy of these founders has meant the Islamist groups retain a disproportionate degree of influence, the Muslim community is now too large and unwieldy for them to exert the same degree of dominance. Similarly, the assimilation process—slowed by the socio-political hostility that arose in the 1960s to the “melting pot” and the increased prevalence of identity politics—has worked its way into the community. Organizations that survived in this environment have had to focus more on the American reality and have consequently drifted ever-more from the concerns of the Arab-Islamic Mashreq and their parent organizations.
Shifts in Identity

Having analyzed the institutional development of Islamic organizations in the U.S., and their birth one from another like Russian Matryoshka dolls, we now turn to their internal transformations in response to the shifting political and social circumstances, and the changing personnel. This section will also analyze three distinct historical moments that placed Islam and Muslims at the center of American society’s attention,[23] and threw challenges to the structure, objectives, and modus operandi of these organizations.

These major turning points are:

First, the Iranian revolution in 1978-9 that toppled the secular, pro-Western Imperial Government of the Shah, and the fallout in the Arab region as the Islamic Republic sought to export its revolution, such as the rise of the Sahwa al-Islamiyya (Islamic Awakening) movement in the Gulf region, especially Saudi Arabia, and the accompanying trend of Saudi missionary institutions going into overdrive in an attempt to blunt the spread of the Iranian revolution. The Saudi Islamic charities set to work, including in the West, leading to the beginning of generous financial flows from traders and other wealthy Gulf Arabs. This activity was particularly salient in the U.S., and opportunists among the Islamist movements exploited the phenomenon of financial generosity, despite being ideologically hostile to the Saudi government. And within this was outright corruption, as individuals skimmed off cash themselves, even as they channeled Saudi funds into a mixture of advocacy, politics, trade, and profit for Islamist activists.

Another element of the Iranian revolution that increased interest in Islam was the seizure of the American Embassy and the holding of the hostages for more than a year. The Iranian revolution’s leader, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, called for America to “repent”, and this
sparked a debate at universities and research centers about what form the repentance should take. This helped contribute to a dynamic of indigenous conversions to Islam, by quite a number of white Americans and even more notably by black people. The most prominent black Muslim group was the Nation of Islam (NOI), an outright racist gang that claimed to adhere to Sunnism. After the death of NOI founder Elijah Muhammed, they were inspired by his son, Warith Deen Mohammed, to infiltrate other Muslim organizations that were controlled by the Muslim Brotherhood and the Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan.

The NOI cadres had almost no interest in international politics, and their joining these other Muslim groups pushed these organizations to care much more about the domestic front. The leadership of these organizations were challenged on their old approach, as the new members demanded more democracy and respect for ethnic diversity within their institutional structures. As the composition became more various—with Arab Muslims, African-origin Muslims, and South-Asian Muslims mixing together—it diluted the connection to, and dependence on, the Mashreq and its Islamist groups.

Second, Saddam Hussein’s Iraq conquering Kuwait and the subsequent American-led military campaign to restore the sovereignty of Kuwait in 1990-1. This historic moment was like an earthquake for Islamic organizations in America. The political interests clashed with the economic ones, creating deep divisions, for the first time, in these organizations, reflecting the schism within the Muslim community more broadly. The Muslim Brotherhood’s general stance—rejecting Saddam’s occupation of Kuwait, yet rejecting the use of Western force to liberate Kuwait—was tacitly pro-Saddam, since without Western power Saddam would be allowed to keep Kuwait. Some Brotherhood branches, in Jordan and Palestine, were plainly enthusiastic supporters of Saddam’s aggression, while the Kuwaiti Brotherhood openly supportive of the Western coalition’s operation to evict Saddam. This confusion had long-lasting effects.

In America, there were Friday prayers given in some places for the Kuwaiti liberation operation and in other places for those who stood with Saddam. “Arab brotherhood” had always been a mirage and now the politics of the Mashreq had divided Muslims abroad. This realization that the Mashreq was a problem for Muslim unity in America increased the pressure, especially from the second-generation immigrants, African-American Muslims, and white converts for American Muslims to be engaged as American citizens, and to leave the squabbles and attachments of their former homelands behind.

The leaderships of many of these organizations struggled to balance the pressure from their membership, which largely wanted an American outlook, and their donors, who were based on the Gulf, and wished the organizations to reflect their views on the Gulf crisis. This divergence was ultimately impossible to manage, as the external donors had little concept of conditions locally in America, and the traditional leaders of American Islamic organizations, those who began the project of community organizing in the early 1960s, lost their monopoly in representing American Islam. The indigenization of these organizations was sped up, shifting from being immigrant service organizations to American civil society organizations.

Third, the events of 11 September 2001. This senseless disaster marked a watershed in the development of Islamic organizations in the U.S., bringing about radical, unprecedented changes. All of these organizations sought to distance themselves in public from Islamist groups in the Mashreq, albeit some of them continued to follow the parent groups in secret. The organizations were keen to stress their Americanness and their rejection of extremism and violence.
The U.S. government sought to reassure the Muslim community after 9/11 that there would be no reprisals against them for what their co-religionists had done, and when seeking out interlocutors ended up connecting with Muslim Brotherhood organizations whom they did not fully understand, and also Sufi groups, considering them a peaceful alternative to the Salafist-derived extremists, who were amenable to democracy and human rights, including women’s rights. The notion of finding good Muslims to get rid of bad Muslims was an adaptation of Henry Kissinger’s strategy to use good Communists to rid the U.S. of bad Communists.[24]

The ironic effect was that just as the door was being closed on extremists from the Mashreq like Yusuf al-Qaradawi, heretofore a mainstay among the speakers at these Islamic groups and now no longer considered acceptable, the doors were flung wide open to theological entrepreneurs in America. The issues of Palestine and Kashmir faded, but the list of grievances an individual could latch onto to make himself a leader among America’s Muslims was endless.

One of the most notable changes was engagement in interfaith dialogues and cooperation with other religions in administering social programs and the like. This did not apply to all—CAIR, ICNA, and MAS have maintained some of their previous agenda, and took advantage when U.S. administrations are soft on the Muslim Brotherhood.

**Political Implications**

As the identity and affiliation of Muslim immigrants in the U.S. has shifted, it has altered the agenda and objectives of the Islamic organizations that seek to represent this community. This process has gone through four main stages.

**Stage One: The Muslim’s sense of alienation in space and time** because of the absolute affiliation to the Mashreq with its states, societies, concerns and conflicts, and hence carrying all the conflicts of their homelands to America. Before the Gulf war in 1991, Muslims in America lived mentally in their old countries—living its worries, problems, conflicts and crises. As such, the fissures in the community were about these issues; they took nothing from the actual place in which they lived (the U.S.) but food and drink. During the 1990s, the Muslim community in the U.S. came apart at the realization their deriving political positions...
from the Mashreq placed them far away from their concerns and problems. This led to the next stage.

**Stage Two: The unaffiliated Muslim**, who has lost his belonging to the Mashreq, and could not gain full loyalty to the American society. Influenced by Islamists, many American Muslims believed their old homelands were ruled by Pharaoh and the U.S. was controlled by hostile Zionists and Christian fundamentalists. Torn between the two and angry at both, individuals and organizations struggled to place their loyalty.

**Stage Three**: The disassociation from the Mashreq after the events of September 2001. The association with the Mashreq had become a threat to the interests of the American Muslim, delegitimizing the America Islamic organizations and putting the future of its leaders and interests to the test. So the vast majority hurried to distance themselves from the Mashreq and all that it represents. The only exception was those listed officially in the structure of the global Muslim Brotherhood organization, who saw a match between the interests of the Brotherhood and those of the U.S. government. They remained in touch with their parent movement in the Mashreq, although they maintained the same rhetoric as the others that distanced them from groups rejected by the U.S. administration.

**Stage Four**: adaptation and integration into American society. As the second generation of Muslim immigrants grew up in the U.S., natural integration in American life began to take place. Having been brought up in American schools and universities, without the experiences of their parents in their homelands, the rupture between the old world and the new became more pronounced, and new crop of Islamic leaders in the organizations began to emerge, with an Americanized focus. Whatever sympathies these leaders had with foreign “Muslim causes” and with the inculcation of conservative religious values, American public values and American interests had to come first. Among the key indicators of this integration in the second generation are: voting in elections at all levels; running for legislative positions at the local, state and federal levels; serving in the U.S. military; joining the U.S. police force; focusing philanthropy on domestic crises; engaging in joint activities with the people of other religions; and the predominance of American cultural identity over younger generations in terms of arts and fashion.

American Islamic organizations have undergone a number of major shifts, governed by the changing demographics of the Muslim population, then the changing popular attitudes to Islam and Muslims, and finally changes in the Mashreqi homelands of these populations. The main long-term trend is the gradual disengagement of American Islamic organizations from the Mashreq—it its key political issues, and its leaders and thinkers. The Muslim Brotherhood resisted this indigenization trend, but it was largely unsuccessful. Even in 2013, when many American Muslims objected to the ouster of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, it was much less to do with loyalty to the Brotherhood as such and more to do with their devotion to the concepts of democracy and human rights.

**Conclusion**

American Islamic organizations have taken a long, winding road over the last fifty years, which has hampered them from embedding fully in American society and serving their stated cause of bettering the lot of the American Muslims they claim to represent.

Most, if not all, of these groups were shackled at their outset by partisan and foreign political links, turning them into instruments to serve the interests of political groups in the Mashreq.
Even on those terms these groups failed: neither the parent group nor America’s Muslims succeeded in getting what they needed.

It took decades to begin to correct this situation, for American Islamic organizations to realize that they existed only to serve the American Muslim community and to contribute to the general American community, not to serve foreign agendas and groups that live thousands of miles away.

Three key factors contributed to this fundamental transformation in goals, ideas, and commitments that made American Islamic organizations much freer from external dependency and much more engaged in addressing the concerns of Americans:

- Major international events, particularly those of September 2001 and the subsequent wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, prompted American Muslims and their organizations to show their loyalty to the state, society, and the U.S. military, and to distance themselves from all external loyalties.

- Foreign funding disruption due to laws regulating donations coming from the Arab Gulf states, which have played a key role in funding all Islamic activities in the U.S.

- The emergence of a new generation of Muslim immigrants in the U.S., who were born, raised, and educated there, severing the direct emotional links to the Mashreq.

The combination of these three factors led to radical shifts in Muslim organizations in the U.S., leading them in general to disengage politically and financially from the outside world, and focus on domestic issues Muslims faced and the problems of the broader American society.

Nevertheless, there are groups—namely CAIR and MAS—that retain strong connections to the Mashreq for personal reasons related to their leaderships.

CAIR, in particular, has proven problematic. CAIR’s work against Islamophobia in the U.S. has gained it a high degree of respectability among American Muslims, and the director—an associate of the Muslim Brotherhood and the Palestinian “resistance” movements—has taken advantage of this success to support foreign causes. He makes regular statements in the Arab media, especially to the Qatar-based Al-Jazeera channel, which CAIR’s American
constituents rarely see but which have put CAIR on a collusion course with many Arab governments.

MAS continues to be led by Muslim Brotherhood operatives, and this has marginalized the group to some degree as the other Islamic organizations have moved on.

Analyzing the development of Islamic organizations in the U.S., one can conclude that the indigenization of these organizations in the sense of becoming purely American best serves American Muslims, preserving their values and religion in the American social context. There is some way to go before there is an authentic American Islam, but in achieve that goal two basic conditions are required:

- American Muslim leaders who grew up in American society and have nothing to do with foreign engagements, such as Shaykh Hamza Yusuf, since the main hindrance to the work of Islamic organizations in America is the attempt by those linked to Islamists abroad to use their position in America to have the American government intervene in their political conflicts in foreign countries.

- Self-financing for all activities and events and discontinuing the external funding which holds these organizations and communities hostage to external agendas.

Disentangling American Muslim groups from the politics of the Maghreb is good for both sides—for Americans and the Arab world. A policy of non-interference in each other’s affairs might also help in mutual understanding, since it will lift much of the suspicion and engagements can take place in a spirit of academic curiosity, rather than political games.
REFERENCES


[4] Ibid. p.70


[21] Leonard, op. cit. p. 179
[22] Ibid, p.179.

