

Muslim Networks and Movements in Western Europe

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Muslim Networks and Movements in Western Europe

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- Luis Lugo, Director, Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion & Public Life

Introduction

Over the past two decades, the number of Muslims living in Western Europe has steadily grown, rising from less than 10 million in 1990 to approximately 17 million in 2010.¹ The continuing growth in Europe's Muslim population is raising a host of political and social questions. Tensions have arisen over such issues as the place of religion in European societies, the role of women, the obligations and rights of immigrants, and support for terrorism. These controversies are complicated by the ties that some European Muslims have to religious networks and movements outside of Europe. Fairly or unfairly, these groups are often accused of dissuading Muslims from integrating into European society and, in some cases, of supporting radicalism.

To help provide a better understanding of how such movements and networks seek to influence the views and daily lives of Muslims in Western Europe, the Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion & Public Life has produced profiles of some of the oldest, largest and most influential groups – from the Muslim Brotherhood to mystical Sufi orders and networks of religious scholars. The selected groups represent the diverse histories, missions and organizational structures found among Muslim organizations in Western Europe. Certain groups are more visible in some European countries than in others, but all of the organizations profiled in the report have global followings and influence across Europe.

Number of Muslims in Western Europe

<i>Countries</i>	Estimated 2010 Muslim Population	Percentage of Population That is Muslim
Austria	475,000	5.7%
Belgium	638,000	6.0
Denmark	226,000	4.1
Finland	42,000	0.8
France	3,574,000	5.7
Germany	4,119,000	5.0
Greece	527,000	4.7
Ireland	43,000	0.9
Italy	1,583,000	2.6
Luxembourg	13,000	2.7
Netherlands	914,000	5.5
Norway	144,000	3.0
Portugal	22,000	0.2
Spain	1,021,000	2.3
Sweden	451,000	4.9
Switzerland	433,000	5.7
United Kingdom	2,869,000	4.6
Total	17,094,000	

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¹ Figures are from a forthcoming Pew Forum report that estimates growth rates among Muslim populations worldwide and provides population projections for 2020 and 2030. A 2009 Pew Forum report, "Mapping the Global Muslim Population" (<http://pewforum.org/Muslim/Mapping-the-Global-Muslim-Population.aspx>) provides 2009 population estimates. For the purposes of this report, Western Europe includes the following countries: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

The profiles provide a basic history of the groups' origins and purposes. They examine the groups' religious and political agendas, as well as their views on topics such as religious law, religious education and the assimilation of Muslims into European society. The profiles also look at how European governments are interacting with these groups and at the relationships between the groups themselves. Finally, the report discusses how the movements and networks may fare in the future, paying special attention to generational shifts in the groups' leadership and membership ranks as well as their use of the Web and other new media platforms in communicating their messages.

It is important to note that the report does not attempt to cover the full spectrum of Muslim groups in Western Europe. For instance, it does not include profiles of the many Muslim organizations that have been founded in Western Europe in recent decades, including local social service providers, or the governing councils of major European mosques. Rather, the primary focus of the report is on transnational networks and movements whose origins lie in the Muslim world but that now have an established presence in Europe. Influential Islamic schools of thought, such as Salafism or Deobandism, are discussed in terms of their influence on various Muslim groups and movements rather than in separate profiles.²

Perceptions About Links to Terrorism

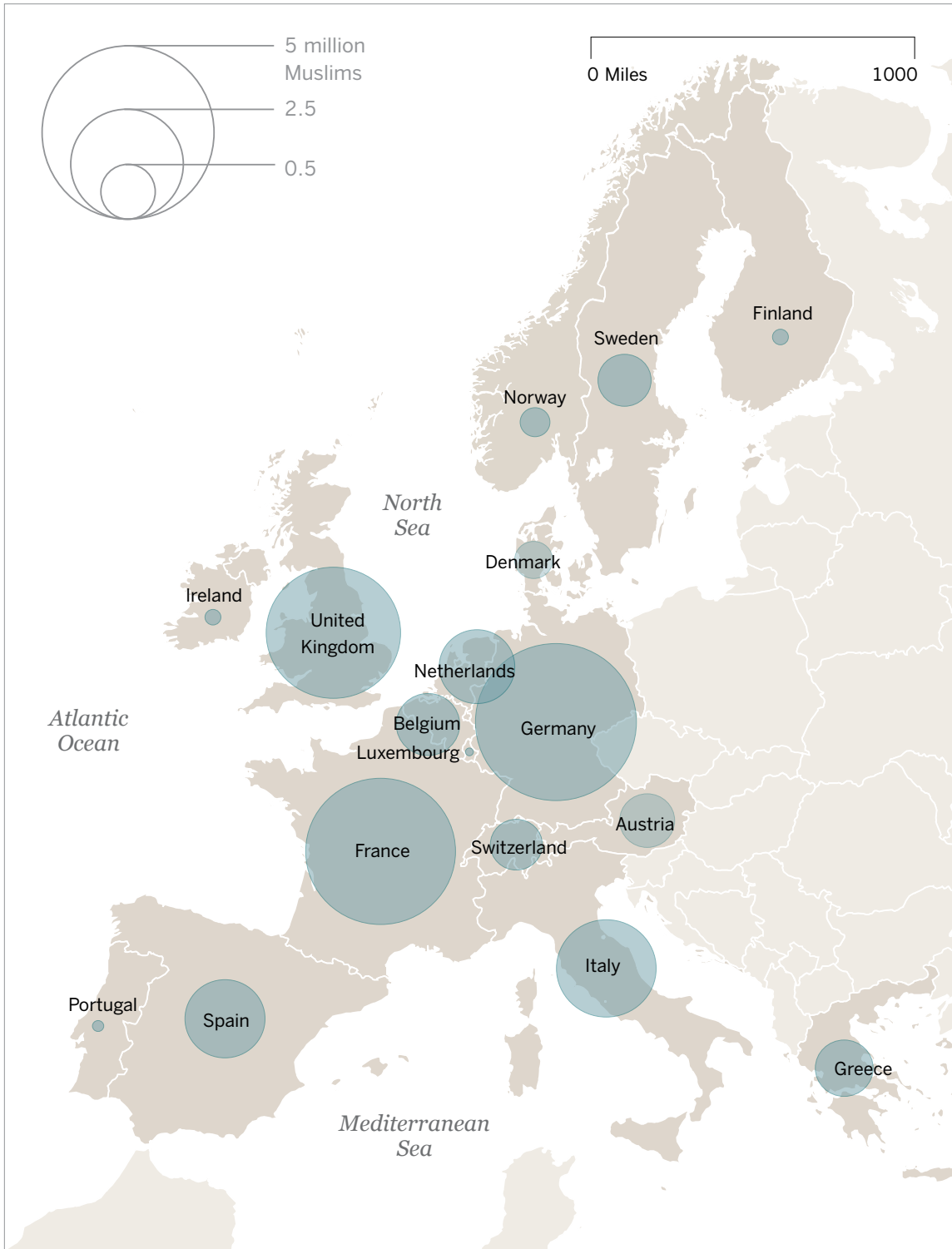
Muslims have been present in Western Europe in large numbers since the 1960s, when immigrants from Muslim-majority areas such as North Africa, Turkey and South Asia began arriving in Britain, France, Germany and other European nations, often to take low-wage jobs.³ Many of the major Muslim networks and movements operating in Western Europe today originated in Muslim-majority countries, including Egypt, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Turkey.

The overseas origins of the groups, and their continuing ties to affiliates abroad, have prompted concerns that by strengthening Muslims' connections to the *umma* – the world community of Muslim believers – they may be encouraging Muslims to segregate

² A glossary at the end of the report contains definitions of terms. Muslim names and terms from the languages of the Muslim world have been transliterated using the system of the *International Journal of Middle East Studies* as a guide. Whenever possible, the report uses individuals' preferred English spelling of their names.

³ For background, see "An Uncertain Road: Muslims and the Future of Europe," Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion & Public Life, October 2005, <http://pewforum.org/Muslim/An-Uncertain-Road-Muslims-and-the-Future-of-Europe.aspx>.

Distribution of Muslims in Western Europe



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themselves from the rest of European society.⁴ In addition, some in the West perceive many Muslim groups as fomenters of radical Islam and, ultimately, terrorism.

It is difficult to generalize about Muslim groups in Western Europe because they vary so widely in their philosophies and purposes. Certain groups, including radical Islamist movements, *do* work to foster extremist sentiments or to detach Muslims from the European societies in which they live. But other groups focus on different goals, such as helping Muslim communities deal with day-to-day religious issues, improving schools or encouraging personal piety.



Sean Gallup/Getty Images

Two Muslim women walk in Berlin's heavily Muslim Neukölln district.

The profiles in this report provide a sense of whether the core philosophy and goals of each group tend to tilt toward or away from Islamic radicalism or extremism, as well as the extent to which they encourage Muslims to integrate into European society, participate in local and national politics and cooperate with non-Muslims on social and political matters. Whenever possible, the report notes instances where questions have been raised in the press, scholarly journals or government sources about a group's possible terrorist links or connections. But the report does not attempt to answer the question of whether particular groups and movements are directly or indirectly tied to terrorism. For one thing, it is often impossible to tell. While individuals with violent or radical inclinations may participate in a particular group's activities, the group itself may or may not do anything to foster violence or extremism.

Furthermore, many European Muslims see these movements and networks as generically "Islamic" and may not care about or even be aware of their political ideologies and social agendas. Individuals also may support or participate in some of a group's activities but not others. For instance, individuals attending a religious class sponsored by an organization with ties to the Muslim Brotherhood may not necessarily support the group's broader political agenda. Some studies have shown that exclusive affiliation with a single group or movement is rare, especially among younger Muslims.⁵ Rather, European Muslims often participate in the activities of multiple groups, sometimes simultaneously.

⁴ See, for example, the arguments made in Christopher Caldwell, *Reflections on the Revolution in Europe*, Doubleday, 2009.

⁵ See, for example, Philip Lewis, *Young, British and Muslim*, Continuum International Publishing Group, 2007.

Likewise, some people are drawn to particular groups principally because of their ethnic or regional origins rather than their social or political viewpoints. For example, the movement known as Jama'at-i Islami appeals primarily to South Asian Muslims, while the Muslim Brotherhood appeals primarily to those of Arab descent. However, there are signs that the ethnic character of some groups and movements is becoming less pronounced, at least among younger generations of Muslims.⁶



Sean Gallup/Getty Images

Muslim women at a fruit and vegetable market in Berlin.

Small Membership, Large Influence

Although many Muslims in Western Europe participate in the activities of these movements and networks, the groups' formal membership rolls appear to be relatively small. Indeed, some studies suggest that relatively few Muslims in Europe belong to any religious organization in any formal sense, including mosques.⁷

Despite their relatively low levels of formal membership, Muslim movements and networks often exert significant influence by setting agendas and shaping debates within Muslim communities in Western Europe. Whether or not they reflect the views of most Muslims in a community, they often are instrumental in determining which concerns receive attention as "Muslim issues" in the media, in government circles and in the broader public debate about Islam in Europe.

⁶ See, for example, Peter Mandaville, *Transnational Muslim Politics: Reimagining the Umma*, Routledge, 2001.

⁷ See, for example, Nadia Jeldtoft, "Lived Islam: Religious Identity Among 'Non-organized' Muslim Minorities," *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, forthcoming 2011.

In addition, many Islamic groups now serve as interlocutors between Muslims and the governments of the European countries in which they live. This arrangement has often come about at the behest of government officials looking for organizations that can serve as conduits to their Muslim constituents. A number of European governments have established councils in recent years to reach out to their Muslim populations. For instance, in 2003, the French government partnered with a number of large Muslim groups to establish the Conseil Français du Culte Musulman (French Council of the Muslim Faith), which now serves as an official representative body for the country's Muslims in dealing with the government in much the same way that certain Catholic and Jewish organizations in France serve as official points of contact for their respective communities.



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Mohammed Moussaoui, president of the Conseil Français du Culte Musulman, meets the press after a meeting in Paris on April 26, 2010.

Pursuing Their Agendas

The growing connections between Islamic groups and European governments, as well as the integration of some of these groups into the continent's political mainstream, have not led to a decrease in activism on the part of these groups. If anything, Muslim groups and movements have become more visible on the European political stage and are becoming more adept at using national media and political channels to pursue a wide range of agendas. For example, the Muslim Association of Britain, an affiliate of the Muslim Brotherhood, became a major player in Britain's anti-Iraq War movement by partnering with disaffected members of the British Labor Party and the Stop the War Alliance.

Even groups that advocate for Muslim political causes often do so by working within, rather than outside of, Europe's legal and political institutions. Most of the movements – including the politicized ones, such as the Muslim Brotherhood – encourage their followers to participate in local and national European elections. The Muslim Association of Britain, for example, routinely publishes lists of candidates – both Muslims and non-Muslims – that have been endorsed by the group.

Many Muslim movements have embraced the tools afforded by new media, including

websites, Twitter, blogs, online videos and social networking sites, to reach new followers. Web destinations such as Facebook and YouTube are replete with content from Muslim groups spanning the ideological spectrum. The groups' messages – sometimes coming in the form of hip-hop music, graphic novels, sports programs and other popular-culture formats – are designed to appeal to young Muslims raised in Western Europe.

Radical groups such as al-Qaeda have used websites to propagate the views of jihadi scholars and, according to some analysts, to recruit potential activists.⁸ But groups that focus on promoting personal devotion, such as the Tablighi Jama'at and traditional Sufi orders, also have used the Web to promote themselves, uploading videos of their conferences and creating Facebook pages dedicated to their key leaders.⁹

While the internet has made it easier for groups to share their messages, it also has raised new challenges. Because of the prevalence of new media outlets, individual Muslims are able to receive information from a variety of religious groups, which potentially dilutes the message and influence of any single group.

At the same time, the internet and other new technologies have allowed Islamic groups in Europe to reach Muslims worldwide. Some European-based groups are now exporting ideas, methods and money back to Muslim-majority countries in the Middle East, South Asia and elsewhere. European affiliates of the Muslim Brotherhood, for example, are engaged in ongoing discussions with intellectuals and ideologues in the Middle East about participation in democratic politics. And radical groups such as Hizb ut-Tahrir, whose global headquarters are in the Middle East, rely on their European branches for publicity and fundraising.

Partly in reaction to the growth and visibility of Muslim movements in Western Europe, Christian and Jewish organizations in the region also have attracted more public attention in recent years and taken on renewed relevance in the eyes of some Europeans.¹⁰ In that sense, Muslim groups, collectively, may be helping to create more space for religion in general in the European public square.

8 See, for example, Gabriel Weimann, *Terror on the Internet*, United States Institute of Peace Press, 2006.

9 See, for example, <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Tablighi-Jamaat/107876112574573>, <http://www.facebook.com/topic.php?uid=264325220045&topic=12817> and <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Naqshbandi-Sufi-Way-of-Maulana-Shaykh-Muhammad-Nazim-Adil-al-Haqqani/11591942598>.

10 See, for example, John Micklethwait and Adrian Wooldridge, *God is Back: How the Global Revival of Faith is Changing the World*, Penguin, 2009, pages 134-139.

About the Report

This report consists of seven profiles of the movements and networks listed below. The report also includes a glossary of terms, brief “snapshots” of each group and an appendix on the presence of these Muslim groups in North America. An interactive map and table showing the size of the Muslim population in Western European countries are available online at <http://pewforum.org/Muslim/Muslim-Networks-and-Movements-in-Western-Europe.aspx>.

- Gülen Movement
- Muslim Brotherhood and Jama’at-i Islami
- Muslim World League and World Assembly of Muslim Youth
- Radical Islamist Movements: Jihadi Networks and Hizb ut-Tahrir
- Sufi Orders
- Tablighi Jama’at
- Networks of Religious Scholars

For More Information

For a broad overview of Muslim communities in Europe and global Islamic networks, see:

Allievi, Stefano and Jørgen Nielsen, editors. *Muslim Networks and Transnational Communities In and Across Europe*. Brill, 2003.

Lawrence, Bruce and Miriam Cooke, editors. *Muslim Networks from Hajj to Hip Hop*. University of North Carolina Press, 2005.

Mandaville, Peter. *Transnational Muslim Politics: Reimagining the Umma*. Routledge, 2001.

Metcalf, Barbara Daly, editor. *Making Muslim Space in North America and Europe*. University of California Press, 1996.

Nielsen, Jørgen. *Muslims in Western Europe*, third edition. Edinburgh University Press, 2005.



Gülen Movement

The Gülen movement refers to a cluster of religious, educational and social organizations founded and inspired by Fethullah Gülen, a Turkish Islamic scholar, author and speaker now in his late 60s. The movement strives to give faithful Muslims the secular education they need to thrive in the modern world. At the same time, it also emphasizes the importance of traditional religious teachings. To this end, the movement has inspired the creation of a worldwide network of schools and other centers of learning that focus on secular subjects in the classroom but also offer extracurricular programs that emphasize religious themes.

By some estimates, there are now more than 1,000 Gülen-inspired schools and centers in more than 100 countries around the world.¹¹ In Germany, the European country with the strongest Gülen presence, there are at least a dozen of these schools and more than 150 smaller educational and cultural centers. While open to students of all backgrounds, Gülen-inspired schools in Europe typically cater to Turkish immigrants and their offspring. Many of the schools charge tuition, but it is generally low because the schools are subsidized by wealthy supporters of Fethullah Gülen.

The Gülen movement lacks a centralized organizational structure, describing itself as a global *cemaat*, or “community,” whose primary mission is to reinforce the idea that Muslims can be both modern and faithful to Islamic traditions. It is perhaps best understood as an extensive and well-coordinated network of supporters, many of whom make sizeable donations to Gülen-linked foundations.¹²



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Fethullah Gülen at his Pennsylvania home on June 2, 2010.

11 See, for example, Brian Knowlton, “Turk Who Leads a Movement Has Advocates and Critics,” *The New York Times*, June 11, 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/12/us/12iht-gulen.html>, and Joe Lauria, “Reclusive Turkish Imam Criticizes Gaza Flotilla,” *The Wall Street Journal*, June 4, 2010, <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704025304575284721280274694.html>.

12 Helen Rose Ebaugh, a University of Houston sociologist and author of *The Gülen Movement: A Sociological Analysis of a Civic Movement Rooted in Moderate Islam* (2009), cited in Joe Lauria, “Reclusive Turkish Imam Criticizes Gaza Flotilla,” *The Wall Street Journal*, June 4, 2010, <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704025304575284721280274694.html>.

The group's priorities are set by Gülen, who entrusts a relatively small group of deputies to carry out his broad plans.

At the local level, the movement's activities are coordinated by a network of "elder brothers," who preside over the various centers affiliated with the movement. Additionally, the movement sponsors a number of Turkish business associations in Western Europe, which play an important role in networking and facilitating communications among Gülen's followers.

Gülen himself has been living in the United States for the past decade. He came to the U.S. for medical treatment in 1999 at a time when Turkish religious groups were under mounting pressure from the country's secular military establishment. He decided to stay in the U.S. and eventually was granted permanent residency status. He now lives in a secluded compound in the Pocono Mountains in eastern Pennsylvania.

Origins of the Gülen Movement

The movement emerged in Turkey in the late 1960s when Fethullah Gülen began organizing reading groups in the homes of his closest followers in the western port city of Izmir. After establishing a presence throughout Turkey during the 1970s and '80s, Gülen and his followers expanded their educational operations internationally, first to the Muslim-majority regions of what was then the Soviet Union and then, in the mid-1990s, to Western Europe.

The most direct intellectual inspiration for Gülen's work came from the early 20th-century Turkish religious reformer Said Nursi, who combined aspects of traditional Islamic scholarship with modern scientific knowledge in the pursuit of social and political reform in and outside of Turkey.

Like Nursi, Gülen argues that a better understanding of the secular world deepens religious faith. Moreover, he believes that promoting Islam using traditional religious institutions, such as mosques and *madrassas* (religious schools), is unlikely to work in a modern world in which success and social mobility are tied to the mastery of scientific and technical skills. Instead, he calls for an educational program that combines the rigorous study of modern, secular subjects with an extracurricular focus on spirituality and conservative religious values.

Educational Agenda

The Gülen network has pursued its educational agenda aggressively, building hundreds of private schools around the world. The first Gülen school in Western Europe was established in Stuttgart, Germany, in 1995. By 2009, there were more than 50 such schools in Europe, primarily in Germany.

Followers of the movement are often quick to emphasize that these schools are not “Gülen schools,” in the sense of being under the direct control of Fethullah Gülen or the various branches of his movement. Rather, they prefer to speak of them as “Gülen-inspired” educational institutions. Most of the funding for the schools comes from Turkish business leaders who follow Gülen’s teachings.

Classroom instruction in these schools does not include religious topics and generally follows the national curriculum of the countries in which the schools are located. The primary language of instruction is usually English or the language of the host country. Almost without exception, however, the teachers in the schools are affiliated with the Gülen movement. And while religion does not have a place in the classroom, the movement operates a range of other facilities, such as dormitories and community centers, that students are encouraged to use and where the focus becomes more overtly religious.

In places such as Western Europe and North America, where public education standards are higher, the influence of the schools tends to be confined to the relatively small Turkish communities in those countries. But in countries such as Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan and Macedonia, Gülen-inspired schools have proven popular even with secular families, largely because of their reputation for providing students with a quality education.

SNAPSHOT

Gülen Movement



Origin Began in Turkey in the late 1960s under the leadership of Islamic thinker Fethullah Gülen, who now lives in the U.S.

Stated Purpose/Goals

Strives to show Muslims that they can live modern lives while remaining faithful to Islamic traditions; also encourages intercultural and interfaith dialogue.

Method/Activities

The movement spreads its vision mainly through Gülen-inspired schools that offer a modern, secular curriculum in a religious milieu. It also organizes conferences and other outreach activities, often with intercultural groups affiliated with the movement as well as with non-Muslim groups.

Representative Organizations/Key Figures

- Fethullah Gülen is the founder of the movement.
- The Dialogue Society is a Gülen-affiliated outreach and research center in London.
- Forum Für Interkulturellen Dialog is a Gülen-affiliated outreach and research center in Berlin.

Recently, the movement has broadened its educational efforts beyond the elementary and secondary-school level. In the mid-1990s, for instance, supporters of the movement founded Fatih University in Istanbul, giving the movement a foothold in the world of higher education.



© Andreas Rentz/Getty Images

Beyond Education

Schoolgirls write on a chalkboard during a lesson at Türkisch Deutsches Bildungsinstitut Berlin-Brandenburg (TÜDESB), a Gülen-inspired school in Berlin.

Fethullah Gülen's

followers are also active in other spheres, such as the media. This is especially true in Turkey, where his supporters own *Zaman*, the country's largest-circulation daily newspaper, as well as an international news agency, a number of television stations, and various periodicals and websites. These media outlets vary in the extent to which they directly serve the movement's goals, with some merely acting as platforms for opinions and viewpoints that resonate broadly with Gülen's vision. For instance, a special European edition of *Zaman* targets the Turkish diaspora in Europe and provides details of activities and events sponsored by Gülen-affiliated organizations.

To complement its media outreach and educational work in Europe, the movement also organizes a range of promotional activities, such as conferences, lectures, seminars, language courses, music instruction and trips abroad. These are often held under the auspices of intercultural foundations affiliated with the movement, such as the Dialogue Society in London and the Forum Für Interkulturellen Dialog (Forum for Intercultural Dialogue) in Berlin.

Guiding Principles

The Gülen movement generally shies away from building ties with other Muslim organizations in the European countries where it has a presence. At one level, this self-segregation reflects the distinctively Turkish character of the movement. Indeed, outside of Turkey the movement appeals primarily to ethnic Turks. It is therefore not surprising that the movement's influence and impact in Western Europe are highest in countries with sizeable Turkish communities, such as Germany and the Netherlands. To some extent, the Gülen movement also keeps its distance from other Turkish groups in Europe. In Germany, for example, the movement pursues a middle ground between two other major Turkish Islamic groups – the Turkish-Islamic Union for Religious Affairs (known by the Turkish acronym DITIB), an organization closely tied to the secular Turkish government, and the Islamist-leaning Millî Görüş organization.

The Gülen movement's reluctance to join forces with other Muslim groups is not solely a case of self-segregation, however. It also reflects the movement's commitment to the assimilation of Muslims into European society. While some Muslim groups encourage members and followers to emphasize their Islamic identity, the Gülen movement teaches that Muslims should work with and within the majority society. For example, Gülen's followers in Europe and North America frequently try to build partnerships with non-Muslim businesses, universities and other secular institutions to sponsor conferences and similar activities.

Growing Visibility and Scrutiny

Some in the West have characterized the Gülen movement as representing a distinct model of Islam that successfully synthesizes modernity and religion.¹³ But others see the movement as a cause for concern.

In his early writings and public remarks, Fethullah Gülen at times defined his goal as cultivating a generation of well-educated elites in Turkey – cosmopolitan but also grounded in Islamic faith – that would be comfortable with allowing religion a more prominent place in Turkish society. For this reason, some of his critics have accused him of having a hidden political agenda and engaging in a gradualist strategy to undermine the secular

13 See, for example, Graham Fuller, *The New Turkish Republic: Turkey as a Pivotal State in the Muslim World*, United States Institute of Peace, 2007.

foundations of the Turkish state.¹⁴ Possibly because of these concerns, Gülen has always been careful to try to emphasize his agreement with the secular, modernizing vision of Mustapha Kemal Atatürk, founder of the Turkish Republic.¹⁵ In this way, he has sought to separate himself and his movement from more radical Muslim groups in Turkey.

The Gülen movement has been criticized in the West from time to time, even by some who might otherwise laud its goals, because it tends to be guarded in providing specific information about its operations or allowing outsiders access to some of its facilities. As a result of this perceived lack of transparency, as well as lingering concerns that Gülen has a secret political agenda, some have come to view the movement and its work with varying degrees of suspicion.¹⁶

To some extent, the polarized views concerning Fethullah Gülen and his followers stem from the fact that the movement does not easily fit into existing categories of religious organizations in the Muslim world. The movement's rapid expansion is also a factor in the increased scrutiny: The larger the movement grows, the more scrutiny it attracts, particularly in the West. Partially in response to this new attention, the usually reclusive Gülen recently granted interviews to three major U.S. newspapers, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The New York Times* and *USA Today*.¹⁷

14 See, for example, "What's Really Behind Turkey's Coup Arrests?" *Foreign Policy*, Feb. 25, 2010, http://www.foreign-policy.com/articles/2010/02/25/whats_really_behind_turkeys_coup_arrests, and "Turkish language fest shows preacher's global reach," Reuters, June 7, 2009, <http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSTRE5560E220090607>.

15 See Fethullah Gülen, "Ataturk's Contemporary Civilization Aim Reaches a new Horizon with EU," Dec. 4, 2004, <http://en.mfethullahgulen.net/press-room/news/1900-ataturks-contemporary-civilization-aim-reaches-a-new-horizon-with-eu.html>.

16 See, for example, Alexandra Hudson, "Turkish Islamic Preacher: Threat or Benefactor?" Reuters, May 15, 2008, <http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSL0939033920080514>.

17 See Joe Lauria, "Reclusive Turkish Imam Criticizes Gaza Flotilla," *The Wall Street Journal*, June 4, 2010, <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704025304575284721280274694.html>; Brian Knowlton, "Turk Who Leads a Movement Has Advocates and Critics," *The New York Times*, June 11, 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/12/us/12iht-gulen.html>; and Greg Toppo, "Objectives of Charter Schools with Turkish Ties Questioned," *USA Today*, Aug. 17, 2010, http://www.usatoday.com/news/education/2010-08-17-turkishfinal17_CV_N.htm.

For More Information

Various perspectives on the Gülen movement can be found in:

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Muslim Brotherhood and Jama'at-i Islami

The Muslim Brotherhood and Jama'at-i Islami are separate movements that tend to draw the bulk of their members from different ethnic groups (Arabs and South Asians, respectively). Nevertheless, both groups are rooted in a political ideology, frequently described as “Islamist,” that calls for the establishment of a distinctly Islamic system of government.

The Muslim Brotherhood is without question the world’s most influential modern Islamist organization. Founded in Egypt in 1928 by schoolteacher Hassan al-Banna, the group advocates the embrace of Islam as a way to promote both personal development and broader social reform. Initially a religious and social organization, the Muslim Brotherhood quickly became politicized. Its ideology, which calls for establishing Islamic states based on *shari’a* (or Islamic) law, became the basis for virtually all Islamist movements. The group’s standard slogan, “Islam is the solution,” expresses the movement’s emphasis on the systematic application of Islam to all facets of life.

Soon after it was founded, the Muslim Brotherhood spread beyond the confines of Egypt, eventually establishing branches in nearly every country in the Arab world. In addition, it also provided the ideological basis for a number of other prominent Islamist movements outside the Arab world, including the Pakistan-based group Jama'at-i Islami, broadly translated as “Islamic society.”

By the 1950s, the secular nationalist regime of Gamal Abdel Nasser in Egypt came to view the politicized Islam of the Muslim Brotherhood as a major threat to the security of the Egyptian state, and suspected members of the group were imprisoned and in some cases tortured. In the decades that followed, governments in other countries where the movement had a following, including Syria, Iraq and Tunisia, began similar crackdowns on the Muslim Brotherhood, prompting many members of the group to seek refuge in France, Germany, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and other places in Europe.



Hassan al-Banna, the schoolteacher who founded the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt in 1928.

AFP/Getty Images

Expansion in Europe

By the 1980s, many of the emigrants who had taken the Muslim Brotherhood to Europe realized that they would not be returning to their countries of origin, at least in the near future, and they began to work in various European states to create more permanent organizations inspired by the movement. The Muslim Brotherhood's earliest adherents in Europe had remained close to the original ideological goals and organizational structure of the movement in the Middle East, but later European groups sought to adapt the movement's agenda and priorities for new generations of Muslims born and raised in Europe.

This effort resulted in the establishment of some of the largest and best-known Muslim organizations on the continent, including the Union des Organisations Islamiques de France (Union of French Islamic Organizations, est. 1983), the Islamische Gemeinschaft in Deutschland (Islamic Community in Germany, est. 1982), the Muslim Association of Britain (est. 1997) and the Ligue Islamique Interculturelle de Belgique (Intercultural Islamic League of Belgium, est. 1997). Among the founding members of these groups are Kemal el-Helbawy of the Muslim Association of Britain, a former member of the Central Guidance Bureau of Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood, and Said Ramadan of Islamische Gemeinschaft in Deutschland, a close personal aide and son-in-law to Muslim Brotherhood founder Hassan al-Banna and father of the well-known contemporary Muslim intellectual Tariq Ramadan. Another notable figure linked to the Muslim Brotherhood is Rachid Ghannouchi, the exiled leader of Tunisia's Islamist party and a major intellectual figure in global Brotherhood circles, who now lives in London.



A Muslim woman at a rally in London on July 17, 2005, organized by the Stop the War Coalition and the Muslim Association of Britain.

Ston Touhig/Corbis

Today, national entities such as the Union des Organisations Islamiques de France are best understood as loose affiliates rather than as formal branches of the Muslim Brotherhood. The national organizations act as representative bodies for Muslims and advocate for Muslim causes. They also provide coordination, strategic leadership and some funding for a number of small, local Muslims organizations – some of which, particularly in France and the United Kingdom, are led by people with no direct ties to the Muslim Brotherhood. These local organizations engage in a wide range of activities designed to serve the day-to-day religious needs of Muslims, such as ensuring access to *halal* meat, operating prayer halls, sponsoring after-school classes on the Quran, distributing copies of the Quran or providing burial services.

The large, national Muslim Brotherhood-affiliated organizations fall under the loose jurisdiction of the Brussels-based Federation of Islamic Organizations in Europe, an umbrella group founded in 1989 that represents Muslim organizations in more than two dozen European countries. The Federation has at times suffered from leadership disputes and rivalries between its major national bodies. But all of the Federation's constituent organizations have similar goals and objectives: promoting Islam as a comprehensive way of life, strengthening the Muslim community in Europe and encouraging Muslims to participate in European society in order to promote Islamic causes.

The Federation was responsible for the creation in 1992 of the European Institute of Human Sciences, a facility for promoting the study of classical Islamic scholarship among European Muslims. It is based in Château-Chinon in central France (near Dijon), with branches in Paris as well as in Lampeter, Wales (U.K.). The Federation also founded the European Council for Fatwa and Research in Dublin, which conducts research on Islamic jurisprudence and dispenses religious opinions on practical issues specific to Muslims in Europe,

SNAPSHOT

Muslim Brotherhood
and Jama'at-i Islami

Origin The Muslim Brotherhood was founded by schoolteacher Hassan al-Banna in 1928 in Egypt. Jama'at-i Islami was established in 1941 in what was then British India by journalist Abu Ala Mawdudi, who was inspired by al-Banna's ideas.

Stated Purpose/Goals

Both groups originally sought to establish legal and political systems based on Islamic law. Today, European offshoots of the groups promote Islam as a comprehensive way of life and encourage Muslims to participate in the broader society in order to advance Islamic causes.

Method/Activities

National affiliates of both movements engage in a range of activities, including organizing events focused on social and political issues of interest to Muslims.

Representative Organizations/Key Figures

- The Muslim Association of Britain, Union des Organisations Islamiques de France, Islamische Gemeinschaft in Deutschland (Germany) and Ligue Islamique Interculturelle de Belgique (Belgium) are large, national affiliates of the Brotherhood in Europe.
- The Brussels-based Federation of Islamic Organizations in Europe is the umbrella organization for the large, national Brotherhood-affiliated groups.
- Organizations with roots in the Jama'at-i Islami include the UK Islamic Mission, the Islamic Foundation and the Islamic Forum Europe, all based in Britain.

such as the observance of prayers and the permissibility – given Islamic proscriptions against interest and usury – of using Western financial systems.

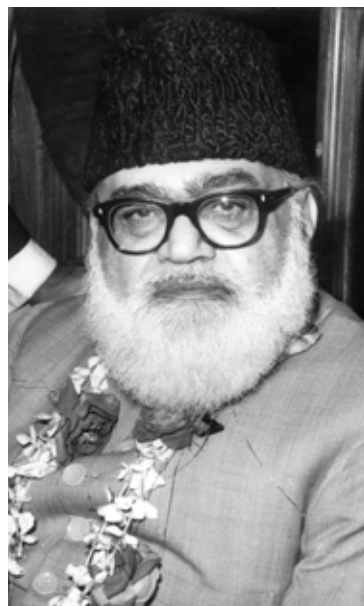
Other organizations inspired by the Muslim Brotherhood have established Islamic centers across the continent to help meet the religious needs of local Muslim communities, including providing spaces for religious classes, libraries, and shops with Islamic books and other religious items. In addition, about 400 mosques and prayer spaces in Europe were said to be at least indirectly associated with the Muslim Brotherhood as of 2008.¹⁸ The Millî Görüş organization in Germany, while not directly tied to the Muslim Brotherhood or its European coordinating structures, represents a similar ideological orientation within that country's Turkish community.

Jama'at-i Islami

The Pakistan-based Jama'at-i Islami is one of the most influential Islamic political movements in South Asia – with branches in India and Bangladesh – and among South Asian Muslims around the world. In Europe, the group is particularly strong in the United Kingdom, where more than two-thirds of the Muslim population of about 2.9 million comes from South Asia.

Groups affiliated with the Jama'at-i Islami share much in common with groups that have ties to the Muslim Brotherhood, and both movements have followed a similar trajectory in terms of their evolution in Europe. The first formal manifestations of the Jama'at-i Islami in Europe date from the 1960s, with the establishment of the UK Islamic Mission and its affiliate, Dawatul Islam. These groups, which still exist today, promote Islamic education with a particular emphasis on Jama'at-i Islami thinkers and perspectives.

Older generations of Jama'at-i Islami adherents in Europe have hewed closely to the original ideological underpinnings of the group, which emphasized the need to establish



Associated Press

Abu Ala Mawdudi, who founded Jama'at-i Islami in 1941.

¹⁸ See Brigitte Maréchal, editor, *The Muslim Brothers in Europe: Roots and Discourse*, Brill, 2008.

a separate and distinctly Islamic political system. But younger generations, particularly those raised in the U.K., have tried to move away from the group's more doctrinaire positions, such as those found in the writings of Jama'at-i Islami's founder, Abu Ala Mawdudi, who together with Hassan al-Banna articulated the ideological basis of modern Islamism.¹⁹

In the U.K., for instance, two groups that were originally inspired by the Jama'at-i Islami – the Islamic Society of Britain and its youth wing, Young Muslims UK – are now, at least to some extent, its rivals. These newer organizations strive to promote a distinctly “British Islam” that combines mainstream civic engagement with, as they see it, a robust and confident Muslim public identity. While their active membership and intellectual appeal are largely confined to well-educated, professional Muslims, the two groups also organize well-attended mass retreats and run neighborhood mentoring programs in less-affluent Muslim areas of the U.K.

Becoming More Visible

In recent years, European organizations with roots in the Muslim Brotherhood and the Jama'at-i Islami have begun working more closely with European governments. This has been particularly true since the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the U.S., as European officials have sought to reach out to their Muslim communities.

In part because of their professional staffs and middle-class leadership, groups linked to the Muslim Brotherhood and Jama'at i-Islami are sometimes seen by government officials and other influential members of society as being proxies for the Muslim community as a whole. For instance, the Muslim Brotherhood-affiliated Union des Organisations Islamiques de France was one of the first organizations invited to join the Conseil Français du Culte Musulman, a group established by the French government in 2003 to represent the interests of the country's Muslims in dealings with the government. And in the U.K., the Muslim Council of Britain (many of whose leaders have roots in groups linked to the Jama'at-i Islami) became one of the government's chief points of engagement with the country's Muslims soon after its founding in 1997.

¹⁹ See, for example, Mawdudi's *Toward Understanding Islam*, revised edition, New Era Publications, 1994, which was originally written in 1932 in Urdu and has since been translated into numerous languages. Also see *Human Rights in Islam*, The Islamic Foundation, 1976.

This relationship became somewhat more fractious after 9/11 and the July 2005 terrorist attacks on the London transit system, however, in part because some of the Council's member organizations were thought to be encouraging intolerance toward non-Muslims.

While some Islamist organizations are establishing closer ties with European governments, others are joining forces with non-Muslim activists in opposition to certain government policies. For instance, one U.K. affiliate of the Muslim Brotherhood, the Muslim Association of Britain, played a key role in organizing several large protests against the war in Iraq.



Scott Barbour/Getty Images

Protesters at an anti-war demonstration in London on March 22, 2003, organized by the Muslim Association of Britain and the Stop the War Coalition.

At the same time, however, the Muslim Association of Britain also was working with police and government security services in England to displace radical Muslim leaders from key mosques in the country, such as the North London Central (“Finsbury Park”) Mosque that was widely regarded as a bastion of radical preaching.²⁰

Changing Agenda?

The Muslim Brotherhood and its affiliates often succeed in setting the public agenda for European Muslims more broadly. But this agenda may be changing. While many of the original Brotherhood-inspired organizations are still headed by the first generation of leaders – many of whom were born outside of Europe – the second and, in some cases, the third generation of leaders – mostly born in Europe – are coming to the fore. Many of the younger leaders are pressing for an agenda that focuses on the interests and needs of Muslims in particular European countries rather than on global Islamic causes, such as the Israeli-Palestinian dispute.

²⁰ See, for example, Robert Lambert, “Empowering Salafis and Islamists Against Al-Qaeda: A London Counterterrorism Case Study,” *PS: Political Science & Politics*, Volume 41, Number 1, pages 31-35, 2008.

Although its agenda might be changing, the Muslim Brotherhood remains controversial in many parts of Western Europe. Many Europeans believe that some Brotherhood-affiliated organizations are promoting agendas that encourage their followers to think of themselves first and foremost as Muslims, thus hindering the assimilation of Muslims in Europe.²¹ There also has been some scrutiny of Brotherhood-linked figures in Europe who have made anti-Semitic remarks, made comments in support of suicide bombings in Israel or been involved in fundraising for groups linked to Hamas, the militant Palestinian Islamic group.²² Others have raised questions about the possible links between some Brotherhood-affiliated groups in the Middle East and global terrorists.²³ For these reasons, the leaders of Brotherhood-affiliated groups in Europe may continue to face questions about the movement's complicated history, even as they struggle to make their agenda relevant to new generations of Muslims.

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Nasr, Seyyed Vali Reza. *The Vanguard of the Islamic Revolution: The Jama'at-i Islami of Pakistan*. University of California Press, 1994.



21 See, for example, Lorenzo Vidino, *The New Muslim Brotherhood in the West*, Columbia University Press, 2010.

22 See, for example, Ian Johnson, "Big Brotherhood Is Watching," *Foreign Policy*, May 26, 2010, http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/05/26/big_brotherhood_is_watching.

23 See, for example, Mary Crane, "Does the Muslim Brotherhood Have Ties to Terrorism?" Council on Foreign Relations Backgrounder, April 5, 2005, http://www.cfr.org/publication/9248/doces_the-muslim_brotherhood_have_ties_to_terrorism.

Muslim World League and World Assembly of Muslim Youth

The Muslim World League and the World Assembly of Muslim Youth are part of a worldwide network of largely Saudi-funded groups that maintain offices in many Muslim-majority countries as well as in European nations with relatively large numbers of Muslims, such as France, Germany and the United Kingdom. The primary focus of these organizations is on promoting Islamic teachings and encouraging Muslims to be more religiously observant, as well as providing interested non-Muslims and recent converts with information about Islam.

The Muslim World League undertakes a broad range of activities focused on the propagation of Islam in Europe, including publishing and media outreach, coordinating the regional activities of preachers and religious scholars, Arabic language instruction and the establishment of Islamic centers. The World Assembly of Muslim Youth focuses primarily on promoting Islamic solidarity among Muslim teenagers and young adults in their early 20s. To this end, the Assembly organizes regular international soccer tournaments, youth camps, and educational exchange and scholarship programs that enable students to study classical Islam, often in Saudi Arabia.

Da'wa and the Saudi Connection

Both groups have strong ties to Saudi Arabia and to its religious and political institutions. For example, the secretary general of the League – a position currently held by Abdullah bin Abdul Mohsin al Turki – is always a Saudi national, and the programs promoted by both organizations are strongly influenced by religious currents coming out of Saudi Arabia.



PIERRE-PHILIPPE MARCOU/AFP/Getty Images

Secretary General of the Muslim World League Abdullah bin Abdul Mohsin al Turki speaks during the opening of the World Conference on Dialogue in Madrid on July 16, 2008.

Both the League and the Assembly also are heavily involved in promoting global *da'wa*. *Da'wa*, which means “call” in Arabic, refers to efforts to propagate or strengthen the Islamic faith around the world. Those committed to *da'wa* encourage both Muslims and non-Muslims to better understand Islam. While many Muslim organizations consider *da'wa* to be an important part of their missions – along with other elements of their social and political agendas – the Muslim World League and the World Assembly of Muslim Youth are wholly dedicated to the propagation of conservative Islamic teachings.

The Saudis have been important players in funding and promoting global *da'wa* since the 1970s, and they have used the Muslim World League and World Assembly of Muslim Youth as vehicles for much of this activity. In 1962, for example, the Saudi government provided approximately a quarter of a million dollars to the League. By 1980, this contribution had reportedly grown to about \$13 million.²⁴ In addition to funding from the Saudi government, the League and the Assembly also rely on donations from private Islamic charities and a network of wealthy individual donors.²⁵

As a result of Saudi money and influence, both the League and the Assembly are widely regarded as promoting the strict Wahhabi brand of Islam that is prevalent in the desert kingdom. Wahhabism was established on the Arabian Peninsula roughly 200 years ago with the aim of purifying Islam by ridding it of outside influences and advocating strict adherence to core Islamic teachings.

Expansion in Europe

The Muslim World League, which was founded in the Saudi city of Mecca in 1962, initially focused its efforts on promoting its version of Islamic orthodoxy to migrant laborers from other parts of the Middle East who came to work in the Saudi oil industry. In the early 1970s, the League followed the Arab migration into Europe with the aim of providing Muslim immigrants with religious education and other services that were largely not available in the West at this time. This marked the beginning of a period of intense growth for the League, which eventually opened offices in cities across Europe and North

²⁴ See, for example, Reinhard Schulze, *Islamischer Internationalismus im 20. Jahrhundert: Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der Islamischen Weltliga (Islamic Internationalism in the Twentieth Century: Studies in the History of the Muslim World League)*, Brill, 1990.

²⁵ Some of these donors may also give to a charitable subsidiary of the Muslim World League based in Saudi Arabia – the International Islamic Relief Organization (IIRO) – that has been accused of supporting terrorism. In 2006, the U.S. Treasury Department designated the Philippine and Indonesian branches of the IIRO – as well as one of IIRO’s regional directors in Saudi Arabia – as funders of terrorism. See U.S. Department of the Treasury, “Treasury Designates Director, Branches of Charity Bankrolling Al Qaida Network,” Aug. 3, 2006, <http://www.treas.gov/press/releases/hp45.htm>.

America, including Copenhagen, London, Moscow, Paris, Rome, Vienna, New York and Washington, D.C.

The Muslim World League frequently partnered with a network of Islamic organizations in Europe to create a local Islamic infrastructure to serve the religious needs of the growing number of Muslims in the region. Much of this work involved funding the construction of mosques and funding the operations of Islamic centers, as well as sponsoring activities designed to spread its ultraconservative brand of Wahhabi Islam. To further its goals, the League often teamed up with other internationally recognized Muslim movements – particularly the Muslim Brotherhood – that did not necessarily share its Wahhabi worldview.

The World Assembly of Muslim Youth was founded in Saudi Arabia in 1972, 10 years after the Muslim World League. Its primary goal was to give Muslim youth access to the strict interpretation of Islam advocated by the Saudi religious establishment. By focusing on Muslim youth, the group also was trying to ensure that it played a role in shaping the religious views of future generations of Muslims. Like the Muslim World League, the Assembly sometimes partnered with other Muslim groups in Europe, including the Forum of European Muslim Youth and Student Organizations and a variety of groups with ties to the Muslim Brotherhood. These partnerships were designed to help the Assembly with its outreach to specific national and local Muslim communities.

Between the 1970s and 1990s, the European activities of the Muslim Brotherhood, the Muslim World League and the World Assembly of Muslim Youth became so intertwined that it was often difficult to tell them apart. Indeed, a number of senior Muslim Brotherhood figures – including Kemal el-Helbawy, the Egyptian-born, London-based founder of the Muslim Association of Britain – have served in leadership positions in the League and the Assembly.

SNAPSHOT

Muslim World League
and World Assembly
of Muslim Youth



Origin The Muslim World League (est. 1962) and the World Assembly of Muslim Youth (est. 1972) were both founded in Saudi Arabia.

Stated Purpose/Goals

To propagate or strengthen Islam (an effort known in Arabic as *da'wa*, meaning “call”), promote Islamic teachings and encourage Muslims to be more observant.

Method/Activities

The Muslim World League is actively involved in publishing and media outreach, coordinating the regional activities of preachers and religious scholars, Arabic language instruction and the establishment of Islamic centers. The World Assembly of Muslim Youth focuses primarily on promoting solidarity among Muslim youth and young adults by organizing international soccer tournaments, youth camps, educational exchanges and scholarship programs. Both groups are widely seen as conduits for conservative Saudi religious influences.

Representative Organizations/Key Figures

- The secretary general of the Muslim World League is Abdullah bin Abdul Mohsin al Turki.
- The secretary general of the World Assembly of Muslim Youth is Saleh al-Wahaibi.
- Egyptian-born, London-based Kemal el-Helbawy has served in leadership positions in both organizations and is also a senior figure in the Muslim Brotherhood.

Changes in Influence

In recent years, the Muslim World League and the World Assembly of Muslim Youth have found themselves in competition with some of the organizations they once sought out as partners. In some cases, these other groups are seen as having done a better job than the League and the Assembly at addressing the needs of Muslims in the West. According to some accounts, one rarely hears younger Muslims talking about the League or the Assembly anymore.

In some respects, organizations such as the League and the Assembly have come to represent a paradox. On the one hand, the groups seek to speak for the global Muslim community – or *umma*. But they also remain rooted in a very particular religious worldview – Saudi Wahhabism – that has not been adopted by most Muslims in the West.

Many Muslims in Europe today are seeking interpretations of Islam that address their unique problems and issues – interpretations that can help them to understand the relevance of Islam to their daily lives. For this reason, they might not be as interested as they once were in organizations based on religious frameworks that are rooted in other cultures, such as the Assembly and the League, and instead prefer home-grown organizations, such as Young Muslims UK, which grew out of the Jama'at-i Islami movement, or the European Council for Fatwa and Research, a Muslim Brotherhood-affiliated group headquartered in Dublin that provides opinions on matters of Islamic religious law for European Muslims.²⁶

The influence of more established *da'wa* groups such as the League and the Assembly has also waned as new technologies have made it easier for other groups to reach wide audiences. Discussions about issues relevant to Muslims are increasingly taking place on the Web – in blogs and in social media outlets such as Facebook and Twitter. In many cases, those leading the discussions no longer seek or need the legitimacy that affiliation with a transnational organization such as the League or the Assembly once conferred. Even when European Muslims are seeking information on Saudi-style Islam, they can go to the websites of such high-profile scholars as Saudi cleric Salman al-Audah, the force behind the popular website islamtoday.com, and the late Nasiruddin al-Albani, rather than trying to obtain information from the League or the Assembly.

²⁶ See, for example, Philip Lewis, *Young, British and Muslim*, Continuum International Publishing Group, 2007.

Although the Muslim World League and the World Assembly of Muslim Youth are less familiar to young Muslims in Europe today than they were a generation ago, these well-funded groups continue to exert substantial influence through their extensive outreach efforts and publishing networks. And while the two groups are no longer the sole purveyors of Saudi-style Islam to European audiences, they still represent an important infrastructure for propagating conservative religious views from the Middle East throughout Europe.

For More Information

For more on the Muslim World League and the World Assembly of Muslim Youth, see:

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Radical Islamist Movements: Jihadi Networks and Hizb ut-Tahrir

Islamic radicalism in Western Europe is generally associated with networks and cells affiliated with global jihadi organizations, such as al-Qaeda, whose ideology calls for the violent pursuit of a global Islamic political order. By most accounts, support for radical extremist groups is relatively low among Muslims in Europe.²⁷ Nevertheless, such groups have been central to the public discussion of Islam in Europe, especially in recent years. Dramatic and violent events perpetrated by jihadi cells, such as the Madrid bombings of 2004 and the attacks on the London transport system the following year, have fostered a growing fear of Islamic extremism among many Europeans and others in the West.

But violent jihadi organizations represent only one segment of a broader ecology of Islamic radicalism that includes militants without direct operational ties to any group, as well as nonviolent radicals who disavow the use of force to affect political change, such as Hizb ut-Tahrir. While media and policy elites often lump these various strains of radicalism together, the political logic that drives the groups often varies significantly.

Radical Islamist movements also differ from broader currents of Islamist activism, such as that represented by the Muslim Brotherhood. While the movements share certain ideological roots, followers of the Islamism associated with the Muslim Brotherhood are, for the most part, committed to working within existing political and legal systems. Indeed, Islamists and jihadists increasingly find themselves at odds rather than working in consort. In fact, some Brotherhood-linked groups have worked with European security services to curb the influence of radical groups. In addition, several new Muslim organizations – including the Quilliam Foundation in London and British Muslims for Secular Democracy –



Office workers at London's Canary Wharf observe a two-minute silence in memory of the victims of the July 7, 2005, bombings one week after the attacks.

© Rolf Soderlind/Reuters/Corbis

²⁷ See, for example, "The Great Divide: How Westerners and Muslims View Each Other," Pew Research Center's Global Attitudes Project, June 22, 2006, <http://pewglobal.org/2006/06/22/the-great-divide-how-westerners-and-muslims-view-each-other/4/#iii-islam-modernity-and-terrorism>.

have been established in recent years to try to counter the influence of radical groups.²⁸

Arrival and Growth of Violent Radicalism in Europe

The origins of Islamic radicalism in Western Europe can be traced to the 1970s and '80s, when a number of Muslim dissidents, including some jihadi ideologues affiliated with violent offshoots of the Muslim Brotherhood, were forced to flee their home countries, such as Egypt and Syria, and arrived in Europe. Europe itself was not initially viewed as a battleground for these early jihadis, who tended to focus on struggles back home. During the 1990s, for example, militants from the Groupe Islamique Armé (Armed Islamic Group) in Algeria used France and Britain as staging grounds to organize and raise funds to continue their struggle against Algeria's secular government.

But the 1990s also witnessed the arrival in Europe of a number of radicals with a broader, more global agenda. Some of these ideologues — such as Syria's Abu Mus'ab al-Suri and Jordan's Abu Qatada — had close ties to Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda. Both figures are considered major voices within global jihadi circles, having written some of the most influential theoretical treatises on global jihad and having worked directly with armed Islamist groups in North Africa and Afghanistan.

Another key figure is Abu Hamza al-Masri, a veteran of jihadi efforts in the Balkans and Afghanistan, who has lived in the United Kingdom since the late 1970s. Abu Hamza was the imam of the North London Central ("Finsbury Park") Mosque during the period in the late 1990s and early 2000s when it became widely regarded as a bastion of radical preaching. Since 2006, Abu Hamza has been in a British prison, convicted of multiple terrorism-related offenses.



© Reuters/CORBIS

Muslim cleric Abu Hamza al-Masri speaks at a rally organized by the radical Islamic group Al-Muhajiroun in London's Trafalgar Square on Aug. 25, 2002.

While Europe had seen sparks of exported foreign conflicts during the 1990s — such as the 1995 Paris bombing linked to the Algerian Groupe Islamique Armé — it was the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks in the United States

²⁸ See, for example, Robert Lambert, "Empowering Salafis and Islamists Against Al-Qaeda: A London Counterterrorism Case Study," *PS: Political Science & Politics*, Volume 41, Number 1, pages 31-35, 2008.

in 2001, and their connection to an al-Qaeda cell in Hamburg, Germany, that brought wider attention to the question of whether Europe might be serving as a staging ground for global jihadi activities.

The Madrid train bombings of 2004 — perpetrated by a group of North Africans ideologically inspired by, although seemingly not operationally linked to, al-Qaeda — raised fears that Europe had become more than a haven for jihadist groups and was now one of their targets. These fears were significantly compounded the following year by the suicide bomb attacks on London's transportation system planned and carried out by four second-generation British citizens, all but one of whom had been raised in the U.K.

With concerns about the radicalization of Muslim youth on the rise, European governments, starting in the mid-2000s, embarked on a range of strategies to counter this newly perceived threat. In the U.K., for example, significant funds were poured into a wide range of counter-radicalization efforts, such as the Preventing Violent Extremism program, which provides inter-faith educational programs and funding for other initiatives aimed at building up the credibility of moderate interpretations of Islam in the eyes of Muslim youth.

Size and Makeup of Radical Groups

Reliable data on the size and influence of radical groups are difficult to come by. Some estimates have suggested that the number of radical Islamists active in jihadi cells or networks in Europe has never exceeded more than several hundred.²⁹ One report estimated that there were 28 active jihadi networks in Europe from 2001-2006.³⁰

29 See Petter Nesser, "Jihad in Europe: A survey of the motivations for Sunni Islamist terrorism in post-millennium Europe," Norwegian Defense Research Establishment, 2004.

30 Edwin Bakker, "Jihadi Terrorists in Europe: Their characteristics and the circumstances in which they joined the jihad," Netherlands Institute of International Relations (Clingendael), December 2006.

SNAPSHOT

Radical Islamist Movements: Jihadi Networks and Hizb ut-Tahrir

Origin Have used Europe for sanctuary and fundraising since the 1970s but began concerted organizing and recruiting efforts on the continent in the 1990s.

Stated Purpose/Goals

To replace democracy and the nation-state, whose legitimacy they reject, with legal and political systems based on Islamic teachings.

Method/Activities

Networks and cells affiliated with global jihadi groups, such as al-Qaeda, as well as individual militants without direct operational ties to any group, pursue an agenda that calls for the violent pursuit of a global Islamic political order. Nonviolent radical groups such as Hizb ut-Tahrir ("Party of Liberation") seek to establish Islamic rule through political means.

Representative Organizations/Key Figures

- Radical leaders and ideologues who have spent extended periods of time in Europe include Abu Qatada of Jordan and Abu Mus'ab al-Suri of Syria, both of whom have ties to al-Qaeda.
- Abu Hamza al-Masri, formerly an imam at the North London Central ("Finsbury Park") Mosque, has been imprisoned in Britain since 2006 for terrorism-related offenses.

Limited in scale, radicalization has also proven to be an idiosyncratic phenomenon. In some cases, the individuals involved – such as “shoe bomber” Richard Reid, who in 2001 tried to set off a bomb on a commercial aircraft – have a history of social alienation and involvement with petty crime. In other cases, those involved in violent acts – such as London subway bomber Mohammad Sidique Khan – are highly educated and seemingly well-integrated individuals.



Anja Niedringhaus/Associated Press

Spanish railway workers and police examine the debris of a destroyed train at Madrid's Atocha railway station after the March 2004 train bombings.

While direct organizational ties to global

jihadists such as al-Qaeda have rarely been established in the case of European jihadists, it is clear that broad ideological affinities do exist between self-starter cells in the West and the militant Islamism of bin Laden and al-Qaeda's second in command, Ayman al-Zawahiri. In some cases, European militants appear to have received organizational or material support from alleged al-Qaeda regional affiliates, such as North Africa's “al-Qaeda in the Maghreb.”³¹ In other instances, however, militants appear to have found inspiration from other sources, such as jihadi websites. Recent years have also witnessed a number of European jihadis traveling from the continent to areas of conflict in the broader Muslim world, such as Iraq, Pakistan and the Horn of Africa.³²

31 The Maghreb (literally “the place of the sunset” or “west”) is a term commonly used in Arabic to refer to the northernmost region of Africa containing the predominantly Arab and Muslim nations of Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia, along with the disputed territory of Western Sahara.

32 See, for example, Craig S. Smith and Don van Natta, Jr., “Officials Fear Iraq's Lure for Muslims in Europe,” *The New York Times*, Oct. 23, 2004, http://www.nytimes.com/2004/10/23/international/europe/23france.html?_r=1&ref=don_van_jr_natta; and Tristan McConnell, “British and American Fighters Respond to Jihad Call in Somalia,” *The Times [of London]*, May 23, 2009, <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/africa/article6345930.ece>.

The Hizb ut-Tahrir Movement

Another important form of Islamic radicalism in Europe is associated with the Hizb ut-Tahrir movement. Hizb ut-Tahrir (or “Party of Liberation”) is frequently equated with jihadism despite being different from the violent radical groups in terms of its organizational structure, methods and public profile. Founded in the Middle East in the early 1950s as an offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood, the group seeks to re-establish the caliphate, or “golden age” of Islamic rule, through political means. To this end, its followers reject both the nation-state as a political institution and democracy as a political system.

Hizb ut-Tahrir never managed to gain a mass following in the Middle East and was largely driven underground in the Arab world due to hostility from secular regimes touting Arab nationalism. Nevertheless, the group has developed a strong presence in Europe, particularly in the U.K. and Denmark. It also has a significant following in Germany, in spite of being banned in that country since 2003 on charges of anti-Semitism.



BEN STANSALL/AFP/Getty Images

Members of Hizb ut-Tahrir stage an anti-war demonstration outside the London Conference on Afghanistan, held at Lancaster House on Jan. 28, 2010.

One reason Hizb ut-Tahrir has been successful in Europe is because it has made an effort to tap into the mixed or “hybrid” sense of identity found among second- and third-generation European Muslims, some of whom feel a sense of alienation from both the Western societies in which they were raised and the Muslim-majority countries from which their parents or grandparents emigrated. Hizb ut-Tahrir’s rhetoric attempts to tap into this sense of alienation by encouraging its followers to view their political identity

in global terms, as Muslims struggling on behalf of co-religionists worldwide rather than as citizens of particular nation-states. For this reason, its activities have often been regarded as an obstacle to the assimilation of European Muslims.

Unlike many jihadi groups, Hizb ut-Tahrir officially eschews violence, saying it prefers to achieve its goal of a new caliphate through persuasion, protests and political organizing, including recruiting senior political and military officials to its cause. The group frequently organizes rallies and protests, particularly in the U.K., which are usually accompanied by ambitious public statements, such as “Britain will be an Islamic state by the year 2020!” The movement also has sought to take advantage of the suspicions that some British Muslims have expressed about the government’s counter-radicalization efforts.³³ For example, the group has published reports linking the British government’s anti-terrorism initiatives to attempts to stifle dissent regarding British involvement in the Iraq War.

In the aftermath of 9/11, Hizb ut-Tahrir adopted a somewhat different strategy in the U.K. than it previously had. Where it once denounced any Muslims who did not share its goals as un-Islamic, it now expresses greater willingness to work with Muslim groups of diverse ideological orientations. However, the group continues to oppose Muslims’ participation in European electoral politics. And, despite its publicly avowed commitment to nonviolence, some analysts in the West continue to view the movement as part of the wider ecology of jihadism.³⁴

The influence of radical Islamist groups and movements has been felt throughout the broader Muslim community of Western Europe. The general climate of fear and insecurity prompted by recent terrorist attacks has resulted in considerable public scrutiny of European Muslims, including anti-terrorism initiatives that have raised civil rights concerns among many Muslims. Some radical groups, including Hizb ut-Tahrir, claim that these anti-terrorism policies represent evidence that Muslims will never be fully welcome in the West.

33 See, for example, “Report: Radicalisation ‘Extremism’ & ‘Islamism’: Realities and Myths in the ‘war on terror,’” Hizb ut-Tahrir Britain website, July 12, 2007, <http://www.hizb.org.uk/hizb/resources/htb-publications/report-radicalisation-extremism-&-islamism-realities-and-myths-in-the-war-on-terror.html>.

34 See, for example, Zeyno Baran, “Hizb ut-Tahrir: Islam’s Political Insurgency,” The Nixon Center, 2004, <http://www.nixoncenter.org/Monographs/HizbutahrirIslamsPoliticalInsurgency.pdf>, and Ariel Cohen, “Hizb ut-Tahrir: An Emerging Threat to U.S. Interests in Central Asia,” The Heritage Foundation, May 30, 2003, <http://www.heritage.org/Research/Reports/2003/05/Hizb-ut-Tahrir-An-Emerging-Threat-to-US-Interests-in-Central-Asia>.

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Sufi Orders

Sufism represents the inward-looking, mystical dimension of Islam. Often thought erroneously to be its own sect or denomination – such as Sunni Islam – Sufism is better understood as an approach that mixes mainstream religious observances, such as prescribed daily prayers, with a range of supplementary spiritual practices, such as the ritual chanting of God’s attributes (*zhikr*) or the veneration of saints.

Sufism dates back almost to the time of the Prophet Muhammad, and it has been present in Muslim societies for more than 12 centuries. Historically, Sufis were organized into a number of brotherhoods or mystical orders (*tariqat*, literally “paths”), each with its own religious rites, saintly lineage and leadership structure. The head of each order, generally a hereditary position known as the *shaykh* or *pir*, represented a spiritual genealogy tracing back to the prophet.

The theological orientation of Sufism – with its inward focus on spirituality – is such that its followers tend to shy away from more political forms of Islam. Historically, however, Sufi orders have not always been entirely apolitical. Some Sufi leaders, especially in the Muslim world, have allied themselves with political forces

and, in some instances, even with militant causes. Many Sufi orders place a great deal of emphasis on *shari’a* (Islamic) law and the strict observance of orthodox requirements in the areas of worship and social affairs. Moreover, given the pre-eminent position of the *shaykh* or leader, the orders can be rather authoritarian and rigidly hierarchical. For example, the most devoted followers of an order (known as *murids*) are expected to follow the leader’s directives without question.



A traditional Sufi ceremony takes place in a prayer room in Rahovec, Kosovo.

Armen Nisani/AFP/Getty Images

The emphasis on personal and emotional religious experiences in Sufism made it enormously popular among the masses and led to new forms of religious expression, including singing and dancing (the whirling dervishes of Turkey are a well-known example). Sufism's popular appeal ultimately helped Islam spread across Africa, Asia and Europe. Today, many well-known Sufi orders – such as the Naqshbandis and Qadiris – enjoy a substantial global following. These brotherhoods have become thoroughly integrated into the social structure of many Muslim societies, and it is therefore not surprising that when Muslim immigrants from Asia, Africa and the Middle East began arriving in Europe in significant numbers in the 1960s, many brought their Sufi order affiliations with them.

Not all Sufism in contemporary Europe is the result of recent migrations, however. Some Sufi orders, such as the Bektashis of Albania, Bulgaria and Macedonia, have been present in the region since the Middle Ages. Indeed, the religious culture of Muslim communities in the Balkans has largely been shaped by the legacy of Sufism.

Ethnic Makeup and Size

Regardless of their origins, Sufi orders in Europe are deeply embedded in the cultures of many Muslim communities – so deeply, in fact, that it is often difficult to distinguish them from particular cultures and ethnic groups. The Tijani and Muridi orders, for example, are thoroughly woven into France's West and North African communities. A slight majority of the U.K.'s predominantly South Asian Muslim community are Barelwis, followers of a broad Sufi-oriented movement that encompasses a variety of orders, including the Chistis, Qadiris and Naqshbandis.

Some large Sufi orders cross multiple ethnic groups. The Naqshbandis, for example, are strongly represented across many Muslim communities in Europe. Today, it is one of the most prominent orders in the U.K. Through annual visits to Britain from his home base in Cyprus, the Naqshbandis' leading *shaykh*, Nazim al-Qubrusi, has developed a diverse following of Turks, South Asians and white or Afro-Caribbean converts in London and Sheffield, as well as a group of South Asian followers in Birmingham.



Nazim al-Qubrusi, leader of the Naqshbandis, at his home in Cyprus on Feb. 18, 2005.

ALEX MITA/AFP/Getty Images

Given the pervasiveness of Sufi orders in Europe, and the often informal nature of their influence, it can be difficult to determine their actual size. In addition, while some Muslims choose to formally join a particular order, others may opt for a more informal relationship, treating the heads of Sufi orders as respected spiritual guides (*murshids*) rather than as formal religious leaders. Nevertheless, Sufism's influence is strong. In Germany, for example, up to 15% of Turkish immigrants and 20% of German-born Turks are thought to be active members of Sufi-based organizations, such as the Sulaymançis.³⁵

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Fouzi Skali, who oversees a sub-branch of the Qadiri order in France, has given a more modern face to Sufism.

Some Sufi orders – particularly those with leadership figures who have been educated or are based in the West – have been particularly successful at adapting to European cultures and societies. For example, Fouzi Skali, a Sorbonne-trained anthropologist who oversees a sub-branch of the Qadiri order in France, has succeeded in making Sufism attractive to an urban, modern-educated, middle- and upper-class audience – a departure from earlier perceptions in France of traditional Sufism as rural and backward. Members of this order today come from all strata

of French society. Skali has also managed to generate interest in Sufi culture among a wider European audience by marketing Moroccan Sufism through numerous cultural events and festivals, some of which are broadcast on French television.

³⁵ See Gerdien Jonker, "The evolution of the Naqshbandi-Mujaddidi: Sulaymançis in Germany," in Jamal Malik and John Hinnells, editors, *Sufism in the West*, Routledge, 2006.

SNAPSHOT

Sufi Orders



Origin Sufism has been present in Muslim societies for more than 12 centuries. Historically, Sufis were organized into a number of brotherhoods or mystical orders, and many Muslim immigrants took their Sufi order affiliations with them to Europe. Other Sufi orders have been present in the region since the Middle Ages.

Stated Purpose/Goals

Sufism is the inward-looking, mystical dimension of Islam, emphasizing personal and emotional religious experiences. The theological orientation of Sufism, with its inward focus on spirituality, is such that its followers generally tend to shy away from more politicized forms of Islam.

Method/Activities

Sufism mixes mainstream religious observances with a range of supplementary spiritual practices. Some of the most popular and well-known examples of Sufi practices are the ritual chanting of God's attributes (*zhikr*) and dancing, such as that performed by the whirling dervishes in Turkey.

Representative Organizations/Key Figures

- The Naqshbandi order has a global following and is found throughout Europe; it is led by Nazim al-Qubrusi from his base in Cyprus.
- The Qadiri order has a broad following in Europe; Sorbonne-trained anthropologist Fouzi Skali oversees a sub-branch of the order in France.

Indeed, the leaders of Sufi orders in Europe are frequently involved in a wide range of extra-spiritual activities. For example, Faizul Aqtab Siddiqi, leader of a Naqshbandi order in Britain, practices civil law as a certified barrister and provides *shari'a*-compliant arbitration for settling conflicts between Muslim commercial disputants. He also helped to organize a large protest in London in 2006 against the now-famous Danish cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad that many Muslims found offensive.

Government Promotion of Sufism

In recent years, some European governments have sought to promote Sufism as a culturally authentic counterweight to more politicized Islamist movements, such as the Muslim Brotherhood. Sufism's emphasis on personal spirituality fits neatly with secular European notions that religion should be reserved for private life rather than for the public square.

But the efforts by European governments to promote Sufism have not always been successful. For instance, the Sufi Muslim Council in the U.K. – which was founded with the encouragement of the government in the aftermath of the July 2005 London transit bombings – has been widely viewed with suspicion by British Muslims, who question its credibility as a representative of the community.³⁶ Many see the Council as an attempt by the government to displace larger and more established organizations, such as the Muslim Council of Britain, which is widely regarded as the main national umbrella body for Muslim organizations in the U.K., and the British Muslim Forum, a grassroots group representing the majority strain of Sufism in the U.K. Others perceive the Sufi Muslim Council as a blatant attempt by the government to co-opt traditional Sufism for political purposes.³⁷ These debates are taking place against the backdrop of broader discussions that have been going on since 9/11 over how Western governments can promote various forms of “moderate Islam.”³⁸

36 See, for example, Oliver King, “Criticism for new Muslim organization,” *The Guardian*, July 19, 2006, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2006/jul/19/immigrationpolicy.religion>.

37 See, for example, Shehla Khan, “From another shore - New Sufis for New Labour,” *The Muslim News*, Aug. 25, 2006, <http://www.muslimnews.co.uk/paper/index.php?article=2563>.

38 See, for example, Angel Rabasa et al., *Building Moderate Muslim Networks*, The RAND Corporation, 2007; see especially chapter 6.

An Appetite for Spirituality

Apart from debates about the political role of Sufism in Europe, there are signs of a broader groundswell of popular interest in this particular approach to Islam, including the noticeable popularity in Europe of such figures as Yemeni Sufi scholar Al-Habib Ali al-Jifri and American Sufi scholar Hamza Yusuf Hanson.³⁹

Hamza Yusuf, director of the Zaytuna Institute in San Francisco, is an American convert to Islam whose fusion of spirituality, traditional Islamic learning and colloquial style has earned him a following among young Muslims in the West.

In the face of what is often experienced as an onslaught of competing and sometimes contradictory views on religion available through the Web and other new media channels, some Muslims have found that affiliation with a Sufi order offers an appealing alternative: a single, reliable source of information on Islam that comes with a personal spiritual guide.⁴⁰ The new wave of enthusiasm for Islamic mysticism suggests that this tradition will continue to have a pervasive influence across Europe's Muslim communities.



American Sufi scholar
Hamza Yusuf Hanson.

Religion News Service Photo courtesy of Zaytuna College

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³⁹ For more on al Habib Ali al-Jifri, see Saeed Al-Batati, "Habib Ali Zain al-Abideen al-Jifri," *Yemen Times*, Aug. 12, 2009, <http://www.yementimes.com/DefaultDET.aspx?i=1008&p=report&a=1>. For more on Hamza Yusuf Hanson, see Jack O'Sullivan, "If you hate the West, emigrate to a Muslim country," *The Guardian*, Oct. 8, 2001, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2001/oct/08/religion.uk>.

⁴⁰ See, for example, Celia A. Genn, "The Development of a Modern Western Sufism" in Martin van Bruinessen and Julia Day Howell, editors, *Sufism and the 'Modern' in Islam*, I.B. Tauris, 2007.

Tablighi Jama'at

The Tablighi Jama'at (“Society for Spreading Faith”) is a global educational and missionary movement whose primary purpose is to encourage Muslims everywhere to be more religiously observant. It currently operates in roughly 150 countries around the world, including in Western Europe.

According to the teachings of the Tablighi Jama'at, the reformation of society is achieved through personal spiritual renewal. To this end, the group encourages its followers to undertake short-term preaching missions, known as *khuruj*, in order to reinforce the religious norms and practices that, in its view, underpin a moral society. These missions typically last from a few days to a few months.

The movement does not have a large formal membership. Instead, it is largely comprised of small groups of itinerant male preachers – usually no more than 10 per group – who travel, eat, sleep, wash and pray together and often observe strict regimens relating to dress and personal grooming. When these groups of lay preachers arrive in a new area, they reach out to Muslims of all social strata in an effort to remind them of the core teachings of the Prophet Muhammad and encourage them to attend mosque prayers and listen to sermons.



Jon Super/Associated Press

The Tablighi complex in the British town of Dewsbury.

The Tablighi Jama'at is thought to be one of the world's largest religious movements. Exact membership figures are difficult to determine, however – given the diffuse nature of the group and the fact that many of its followers participate in its activities only on a part-time basis – and estimates range as widely as 12 million-80 million.⁴¹

41 See, for example, Muhammad Khalid Masud, editor, *Travellers in Faith: Studies of the Tablighi Jama'at as a Transnational Movement for Faith Renewal*, Brill, 2000, and Fred Burton and Scott Stewart, “Tablighi Jamaat: An Indirect Line to Terrorism,” *Stratfor Terrorism Intelligence Report*, Jan. 23, 2008, http://www.stratfor.com/weekly/tablighi_jamaat_indirect_line_terrorism.

Origins and Growth

The Tablighi Jama'at was founded in 1926 in Mewat, India, by Maulana Muhammad Ilyas, an Islamic scholar and teacher. The movement began as an effort to counteract the activities of Hindu revivalists in India, who at the time were attempting to convert Muslims to Hinduism. Worried that existing Islamic educational institutions were not capable of fending off the Hindu challenge, Ilyas envisioned a movement that would send missionaries to villages to instill Muslims with core Islamic values.

Despite its origins in interreligious tensions, the Tablighi Jama'at was for decades a generally apolitical and pacifist movement, which helped the group expand its membership beyond the Indian subcontinent to the Middle East, North Africa and elsewhere. While most Tablighis still live in Muslim-majority countries, such as Pakistan, Bangladesh and Indonesia, the group also has a significant presence in parts of Western Europe, particularly the U.K., France and Spain. Its European membership has been estimated at about 150,000 or more.⁴²

Theologically, the Tablighi Jama'at movement is closely tied to the scriptural, conservative Deobandi school of Sunni Islam, which emphasizes strict adherence to religious orthodoxy. Most of the religious scholars and leaders associated with the Tablighi Jama'at are followers of Deobandism.

Although Deobandism originated in South Asia (in the town of Deoband, near Delhi in northern India), it has much in common with the Wahhabi style of Islam that is associated with Saudi Arabia's religious establishment. However, Deobandi doctrine tends to be more flexible than Wahhabism and is more accepting of other Islamic approaches, such as Sufism.

Lack of Centralized Control

Various regional centers run by Deobandi scholars affiliated with the Tablighi Jama'at attempt to oversee the movement's activities in particular areas. But Tablighis are hard to monitor and supervise, in part because there are so many of them. Administrative control is further complicated by the fact that temporary participants make up a large

⁴² See, for example, Dietrich Reetz, "The Piety of Modernity: The Tablighi Jama'at in Europe," 2009, unpublished.

percentage of the group's membership at any given time. Many of those who participate in its missionary activities do so only on weekends or once or twice per month.

The lack of centralized control means that various Tablighi missionaries operate in different ways and often improvise rather than follow a standard strategy. As a result, the movement's impact tends to vary widely depending on the methods, intentions and inclinations of its local leaders and followers. For instance, a large Tablighi complex in the British town of Dewsbury functions as a regional headquarters, coordinating Tablighi activities throughout Northern Europe. Other centers, however, focus more on local concerns or on serving particular ethnic populations. For example, the Tablighi center in Barcelona has geared its efforts to the needs of the city's immigrants

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A Tablighi follower sits outside the Tablighi center in St. Denis, France.

of North African origin. In France, there is a major Tablighi center in St. Denis, outside of Paris, but most Tablighi groups in the country operate independently, primarily by building relationships with local mosques.

SNAPSHOT

Tablighi Jama'at
(the "Society for
Spreading Faith")

Origin Founded by Islamic scholar and teacher Maulana Muhammad Ilyas in 1926 in Mewat, India.

Stated Purpose/Goals

To reform society by encouraging Muslims everywhere to be more religiously observant.

Method/Activities

Small groups of missionary preachers travel together and reach out to Muslims of all social strata to remind them of the core principles of Islam, encouraging them to attend mosque prayers and listen to sermons.

Representative Organizations/Key Figures

- Maulana Hafiz Patel is the leader of the group in Britain and chief of its European headquarters, which is based in the U.K.
- Mohamed Younès is the group's leader in France.

Tablighi followers in the U.K. tend to be of South Asian descent. The movement in Britain includes many socially mobile professionals and business owners, as well as people from lower- and lower-middle-class backgrounds, who represent the movement's traditional constituencies. In France and Spain, by contrast, Tablighis are largely made up of working-class Muslims from the Maghreb region of North Africa.⁴³

While the group has enjoyed substantial growth in much of Europe, its missionary efforts on the continent have not always been successful. In Germany, for instance, Tablighis have found it difficult to penetrate Muslim communities comprised largely of immigrants from Turkey, a country where the Tablighi Jama'at has virtually no presence.

Working Within the System

Over the course of its decades-long presence in Western Europe, the Tablighi Jama'at has largely come to terms with and adapted to the reality of religious, social and political pluralism in the region. This is particularly true regarding issues of law, politics and civil society. For example, the movement has shown a great willingness to partner with non-Muslim political institutions to further its ends. Indeed, in many parts of Western Europe, the Tablighis have developed a sophisticated understanding of how to engage and work the levers of local political power. In France, for example, local Muslim groups were unable to build a mosque in the southern port city of Marseille until the Tablighis succeeded in partnering with the city's conservative mayor, Jean-Claude Gaudin, who publicly backed the initiative. This helped clear a path for the mosque's construction in 2007.



GERARD JULIEN/AFP/Getty Images

Jean-Claude Gaudin, mayor of Marseille, makes a speech at the beginning of the construction of Marseille's first mosque in 2005 as several Muslim leaders listen.

⁴³ The Maghreb (literally "the place of the sunset" or "west") is a term commonly used in Arabic to refer to the northernmost region of Africa containing the predominantly Arab and Muslim nations of Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia, along with the disputed territory of Western Sahara.

On the other hand, when Tablighis in Britain bought a large tract of land in London and began planning for an enormous new mosque complex – which would have been the largest religious building in Britain – near the site of the 2012 Olympic facilities, opposition quickly developed. Members of the public raised concerns about having so visible a Muslim presence in proximity to the Olympic Games, as well as about the movement’s possible ties to extremism. Despite retaining a public relations firm to address these concerns, the Tablighis were forced to scrap their plans for the mosque in early 2010.

In recent years, the Tablighi Jama’at has used the media, particularly new communications technologies, to spread its message. As recently as a decade ago, the movement viewed information technology with considerable skepticism. Now, however, short videos by the Tablighi Jama’at proliferate across websites such as YouTube, indicating an increasing awareness on the part of the group that it needs to find new ways to compete in the teeming marketplace of Muslim ideas.

Links to Other Groups

While most followers of the Tablighi Jama’at are primarily interested in matters of personal piety and spiritual self-renewal, some have been accused of having ties to radical networks. This concern has been raised from time to time since the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the U.S. by journalists, law enforcement personnel and national security policymakers in the West who say the group’s missionary activities and loose organizational structure can be exploited by radical elements.⁴⁴ “Shoe bomber” Richard Reid, who in 2001 tried to set off a bomb on a commercial aircraft, and John Walker Lindh, the American citizen captured by U.S. forces with Taliban soldiers in Afghanistan in 2001, both spent time in Tablighi circles. And because the group has strong ties to Deobandi Islam, the same school of thought that informs the religious worldview of the Taliban, certain Tablighi Jama’at leaders from South Asia have been linked to some of the same networks as Taliban scholars.

⁴⁴ See, for example, Susan Sachs, “A Muslim Missionary Group Draws New Scrutiny in U.S.,” *The New York Times*, July 14, 2003, <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/07/14/us/a-muslim-missionary-group-draws-new-scrutiny-in-us.html>.

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Networks of Religious Scholars

In addition to other, more conventional social and religious movements, a number of networks built around religious scholars or popular preachers also have a lot of influence among Muslims in Western Europe. While these networks are in many ways separate and distinct from other groups, they often intersect with and draw on the influence of more formal movements and organizations, such as the Muslim Brotherhood and the Muslim World League. In particular, they are often what social scientists call “force multipliers,” meaning that they play a key role in expanding the influence of other Muslim movements and groups.

In many cases, these scholarly networks are built around a key figure – such as a religious scholar or media-based preacher – whose ideas and personal identity largely define the network. In other cases, religious influence emanates from a more formal institutional structure, such as Islamic *fiqh* (legal) councils – groups that provide religious legal opinions on a range of issues. But even within the *fiqh* councils, the overall orientation is still often defined by the vision and thinking of a particular scholarly figure or figures within the council.

There are a number of well-known Muslim scholars and thinkers who have significant influence in Europe today, including Swiss-Egyptian intellectual Tariq Ramadan, Cambridge University scholar Abdal Hakim Murad and Mustafa Ceric, the Grand Mufti of Bosnia.⁴⁵ However, this case study focuses only on those scholars and preachers who have created networks of institutions and media outlets to propagate their teachings.

Yusuf al-Qaradawi

Of all the Islamic theologians with a significant profile in Western Europe, the most prominent may be Yusuf al-Qaradawi, a religious scholar now in his mid-80s who is a well-known media figure throughout the Muslim world. Al-Qaradawi is widely regarded



Ian Nicholson/PA Wire

Yusuf al-Qaradawi addresses a news conference at City Hall in London on July 7, 2004.

⁴⁵ For more information on Tariq Ramadan, see “A Conversation With Tariq Ramadan: Islam, the West and the Challenges of Modernity,” Pew Research Center’s Forum on Religion & Public Life, April 27, 2010, <http://pewforum.org/Politics-and-Elections/A-Conversation-With-Tariq-Ramadan.aspx>.

by Sunni Muslims as one of today's pre-eminent jurists. His views have become influential throughout the Muslim world through prolific publication and translation, and via media outlets such as satellite television and the internet.

Born in Egypt, al-Qaradawi received training and early employment within that country's religious establishment, eventually graduating from Cairo's al-Azhar University, a historic institution widely known as a seat of Islamic learning as well as a full-fledged university. Al-Qaradawi, who is closely associated with the Muslim Brotherhood, was jailed several times by the Egyptian government before finally leaving Egypt in the early 1960s and taking up residence (and citizenship) in Qatar as the dean of the faculty of religious law (*shari'a*) at Qatar University.⁴⁶

Al-Qaradawi rose to mainstream prominence in the 1990s through a religious program on the Arabic-language satellite television station al-Jazeera. His willingness to discuss topics that are controversial in many Muslim countries, including sexuality and the role of democracy, soon won him a large and devoted following in the Arab world and beyond. In addition to his television show, he has written a number of well-known and widely circulated books, including *Al-Halal w'al-Haram fi'l-Islam (The Lawful and the Prohibited in Islam)*, a pragmatic manual for living a modern life in accordance with Islamic law. He also founded the popular website IslamOnline, which has emerged in recent years as a popular forum for information and discussion of religious topics. While the English-language version of the website has been suspended since early 2010 (due to a reported dispute between its conservative owners in Qatar and its relatively liberal editorial offices in Egypt), many young Muslims living in the West have come to regard IslamOnline as a reliable source for explaining Islam's relevance to contemporary issues.

Al-Qaradawi's pragmatic approach to Islamic jurisprudence and his willingness to use various media outlets to spread his views have made him a popular figure with younger Muslims, particularly those living in Europe and North America. At the same time, some of his statements have made him a controversial figure in the West and led to him being banned from traveling to the U.K. since 2008. In a BBC interview, for example, he expressed his support for Palestinian suicide bombings in Israel, saying, "It's not suicide,

46 See Husam Tammam, "Yusuf al-Qaradawi and the Muslim Brothers: The Nature of a Special Relationship," in Jakob Skovgaard-Petersen and Bettina Graf, editors, *The Global Mufti: The Phenomenon of Yusuf al-Qaradawi*, Columbia University Press, 2009.

it is martyrdom in the name of God.”⁴⁷

Prior to being banned from Britain, al-Qaradawi had used London as a platform to convene some of his global projects, such as the International Union of Muslim Scholars – an effort to combat the fragmentation of traditional religious authority by fostering a unified body of classically trained scholars speaking with a single voice on major religious and world issues.

Influence of *Fiqh* or Jurisprudential Councils

Al-Qaradawi and other Islamic scholars have sought to institutionalize their authority in Europe through the creation of several jurisprudential councils that provide religious legal opinions (*fatwas*) on issues ranging from Muslim participation in politics to appropriate financial lending practices. Al-Qaradawi, for instance, was instrumental in establishing the European Council for Fatwa and Research headquartered in Dublin. In addition, various local *fiqh* councils are found throughout Europe. These local councils are particularly prevalent in the U.K, where the question of *shari'a* law gaining recognized status within the British legal system has been a hotly debated topic in recent years.⁴⁸

While the various *fiqh* councils garner attention, it is unclear how much day-to-day influence they actually have on the lives of most Muslims living in Europe. According to a 2006 survey by the Pew Research Center's Global Attitudes Project, for example, a plurality of British Muslims indicated that they were most likely to turn to local imams when seeking guidance

47 See Jenny Booth, "Muslim outrage as Yusuf al-Qaradawi refused UK visa," *The Times*, Feb. 7, 2008, <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/uk/article3325439.ece>, and Magdi Abdelhadi, "Controversial preacher with 'star status,'" BBC News, July 7, 2004, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/3874893.stm.

48 See, for example, "Sharia law in UK is 'unavoidable,'" BBC News, Feb. 7, 2008, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/7232661.stm>.



SNAPSHOT

Networks of Religious Scholars

Stated Purpose/Goals To promote the theology, legal opinions and other ideas of particular scholars or preachers.

Method/Activities

Some scholars have established research centers, foundations and media outlets that focus on religious education, charitable activities, and outreach to Muslims and the broader European society. Many scholars have sought to institutionalize their authority in Europe by participating in jurisprudential (*fiqh*) councils that provide religious legal opinions.

Representative Organizations/Key Figures

- Yusuf al-Qaradawi, a pre-eminent Sunni jurist based in the Middle East, oversees the European Council for Fatwa and Research and the International Union of Muslim Scholars.
- The al-Khoei Foundation, founded by the late Grand Ayatollah Sayyid Abu al-Qasim al-Khoei, is based in London and serves a growing diaspora of Shiites.
- Amr Khaled, an Egyptian preacher currently based in London, is a leading exponent of something akin to "self-help" Islam. He also coordinates a network of charities in the U.K. and the Middle East.
- Zakir Naik, the Mumbai-based founder of the satellite television channel Peace TV, is a popular — albeit controversial — speaker on Islam and comparative religion.

in matters of religion.⁴⁹ Moreover, given the persistence of ethnic and sectarian cleavages within the European Muslim community, no single *fiqh* council has a monopoly. Al-Qaradawi's European Council for Fatwa and Research, for instance, seems to have greatest influence within certain parts of the Arab Muslim community. South Asian Muslims, by contrast, are more likely to turn to a different network of scholars for legal opinions.

Sayyid Abu al-Qasim al-Khoei and the al-Khoei Foundation

Shiism, one of the two main branches of Islam, recognizes a fairly formal clerical hierarchy, in contrast with Sunni Islam, which tends to emphasize the authority of particular textual traditions and schools of thought.⁵⁰ Many different Shiite groups can be found in Europe, including the Khoja community from South Asia (by way of Africa), Yemeni Ismailis and Indian Bohras. But most Shiites living in Europe belong to the dominant "Twelver" branch (*ithna'ashari*) that is found in Iran, Lebanon, the Arab Gulf states and Pakistan.

Unique to Shiism is the position of the *marja' al-taqlid* ("source of emulation"), a figure viewed by Shiites as a living example of Islam. One of the most famous and widely followed *marjas* in recent times was Sayyid Abu al-Qasim al-Khoei, a Grand Ayatollah in the Iraqi holy city of Najaf who died in 1992.



REUTERS/Pool/David Sandison

British Prime Minister Tony Blair with Fadhel Sahlani, Sayyid Abdul Majid al-Khoei (son of al-Khoei Foundation founder Sayyid Abu al-Qasim al-Khoei) and Dr. M. A. Zaki Badawi at the al-Khoei Foundation in North London on Oct. 25, 2001.

49 "Muslims in Europe: Economic Worries Top Concerns About Religious and Cultural Identity," Pew Research Center's Global Attitudes Project, July 6, 2006, <http://pewglobal.org/2006/07/06/muslims-in-europe-economic-worries-top-concerns-about-religious-and-cultural-identity/>.

50 Shiites make up a minority of Muslims in most countries. For more information, see "Mapping the Global Muslim Population," Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion & Public Life, Oct. 7, 2009, <http://pewforum.org/Muslim/Mapping-the-Global-Muslim-Population.aspx>.

He founded the al-Khoei Foundation in 1989 to serve a growing Shiite diaspora living outside the Middle East.

Based in London, with an office in New York, the foundation engages in a wide range of activities, including running schools and mosques for Shiites in Europe, particularly in the U.K.; translating key Islamic texts into English; providing guidance on practicing Islam in the West; providing chaplaincy services for Shiite prison inmates; and assisting community members in matters of marriage, divorce and funeral arrangements. Politically, the foundation opposes the theocratic government that exists in Iran, and it acts as something of a counterweight to efforts by the regime in Tehran to influence Shiites in Europe. Since al-Khoei's passing, the foundation has generally followed the guidance of another important *marja*, Iraq-based Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani.

In the wake of the 9/11 attacks in the U.S. in 2001 and the July 2005 bombings in London, the foundation has also pursued an agenda of outreach and dialogue to repair the image of Islam in the West. The foundation has also worked to advise British governmental bodies, including the Foreign Office and the Department of Communities and Local Government, on Shiism. The foundation's leadership has also worked closely with the Mosque and Imams National Advisory Board, a recent British government initiative aimed at promoting good administrative practices at the country's mosques, as well as preventing their use as hubs of Islamic extremism.

Rise of Media-Savvy Preachers

While traditional religious scholars have influence with some European Muslims, their authority is more limited with those Muslims – Sunnis and Shiites alike – who are young, urban and part of the middle and upper classes. However, there have been exceptions. For example, the popular Egyptian preacher Amr Khaled, currently based in the U.K., emerged some years back as the leading exponent of something akin to “self-help” Islam, combining advice and motivational slogans with religious stories from the life of the Prophet Muhammad.



JENS NOERGAARD LARSEN/AFP/Getty Images

Amr Khaled at a religious conference in Denmark.

Khaled later expanded the scope of his work and began organizing campaigns against social problems such as drug addiction. He also encouraged his followers to establish local charitable initiatives. Khaled's style and approach have since been embraced by a new generation of aspiring preachers, some of whom, such as fellow Egyptian Moez Masoud, also have a following in Western Europe.

Another important figure with a European following is Zakir Naik, a Mumbai-based speaker on Islam and comparative religion. Founder of the satellite television channel Peace TV, Naik is a medical doctor rather than a classically trained religious scholar. While he is not an Islamic legal expert, Naik has impressed many young people (particularly young South Asians in Britain) with his ability to address contemporary issues using a combination of common sense and an encyclopedic knowledge of the Quran and other Islamic sources. He also has established himself as an Islamic polemicist, peppering his discourse with frequent comparisons between Islam and other religious traditions (he is equally comfortable recalling direct quotes from the Bible), always emphasizing that Islam is superior to other religions.



Peace TV home page.

In June 2010, the British Home Office banned Naik from traveling to the U.K., citing “numerous comments” as evidence of his “unacceptable behavior.”⁵¹ On a widely cited YouTube video, for example, Naik voiced support for Osama bin Laden, called America “the biggest terrorist” and said the Taliban’s limitations on women’s rights might have some positive aspects.⁵² Later that month, the Canadian government also banned him from entering that country, where he had been scheduled to speak at a large Islamic conference in Toronto.

51 See “Indian preacher Zakir Naik is banned from UK,” BBC News, June 18, 2010, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/10349564>, and Christopher Hope, “Home secretary Theresa May bans radical preacher Zakir Naik from entering UK,” *The Daily Telegraph*, June 18, 2010, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newstoppers/politics/7836557/Home-secretary-Theresa-May-bans-radical-preacher-Zakir-Naik-from-entering-UK.html>.

52 See http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BVtADPzyWTA&feature=player_embedded.

A New Kind of Islamic Movement?

For the most part, figures like Khaled and Naik do not have ties to established Islamic social or political movements. Indeed, some think their popularity speaks to a desire among Muslims in Europe – particularly young Muslims – to move away from what some people perceive as the rigid organizational hierarchies and highly politicized agendas of groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood and Hizb ut-Tahrir in favor of more pragmatic solutions to everyday problems.

There are also signs that younger generations of European Muslims are looking for a return to the doctrinal purity of “authentic” Islamic teachings based on classical scholarship. Indeed, this may help explain the recent upsurge of interest among young Muslims in Salafism – a highly conservative but generally apolitical school of Islamic thought that is frequently associated with religious influences emanating from Saudi Arabia.⁵³ The theological influence of Salafism can be found in a number of Muslim groups, including the Muslim Brotherhood and the Tablighi Jama’at. But some scholars have argued that Salafism is influential enough in its own right that it should be regarded as Islam’s “new religious movement.”⁵⁴

For More Information

For more information on Islamic religious authorities and scholars, see:

Kramer, Gudrun and Sabine Schmidtke, editors. *Speaking for Islam: Religious Authorities in Muslim Societies*. Brill, 2006.

Zaman, Muhammad Qasim. *The Ulama in Contemporary Islam: Custodians of Change*. Princeton University Press, 2007.

Various aspects of Yusuf al-Qaradawi’s life and work are covered in:

Skovgaard-Petersen, Jakob and Bettina Graf, editors. *The Global Mufti: The Phenomenon of Yusuf al-Qaradawi*. Columbia University Press, 2009.



⁵³ See, for example, Samir Amghar, “Le salafisme en Europe,” *Politique étrangère*, spring 2006, pages 65-78.

⁵⁴ See, for example, Roel Meijer, *Global Salafism: Islam’s New Religious Movement*, Columbia University Press, 2009.

Appendix I: Muslim Networks and Movements in North America

Most, if not all, of the Muslim movements and networks with a significant presence in Western Europe can also be found in North America.⁵⁵ The Gülen movement, for example, has several affiliates in the United States, including the Rumi Forum in Washington, D.C.; the Niagara Foundation, which has branches in several Midwestern states; and the Pacifica Institute, which has branches in Los Angeles, San Francisco and other cities in California. These organizations host conferences and seminars on intercultural and interfaith issues as a means of reaching out to non-Muslim organizations and institutions in their communities. The movement recently opened the Assembly of Turkic American Federations in Washington, D.C., an umbrella organization founded for the purpose of connecting and coordinating the work of various state and local Gülen-linked associations in the U.S.

The movement also funds a handful of Gülen-inspired private schools in the U.S., including Pinnacle Academy in Oakton, Va. (a Washington, D.C., suburb). These private schools are aimed primarily at the Turkish-American community. In addition, followers of the movement have established several dozen publicly funded charter schools in the U.S. that cater primarily to non-Muslims.⁵⁶ The movement also runs a satellite and local-access cable television station, Ebru TV, based in New Jersey, that broadcasts a wide range of family-oriented educational and lifestyle programs, as well as Turkish programs dubbed in English.

Muslim Brotherhood supporters were involved in the founding of several groups in North America, including the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA), the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) and the Muslim American Society (MAS). But these organizations have since diversified their memberships and activities. ISNA is now a broad-based organization whose annual conventions are attended by Muslims of varied backgrounds and sectarian orientations. CAIR focuses on advocacy and civil rights issues

55 For information on Muslims in America, see "Muslim Americans: Middle Class and Mostly Mainstream," Pew Research Center, May 22, 2007, <http://pewforum.org/Muslim/Muslim-Americans-Middle-Class-and-Mostly-Mainstream%282%29.aspx>.

56 See Greg Toppo, "Objectives of Charter Schools with Turkish Ties Questioned," *USA Today*, Aug. 17, 2010, http://www.usatoday.com/news/education/2010-08-17-turkishfinal17_CV_N.htm?loc=interstitialskip.

involving Muslim Americans. MAS, which has dozens of local chapters across the U.S., was the organization most closely associated with the Brotherhood when it was founded in the early 1990s, but its current leadership disavows ongoing ties to the movement and emphasizes the group's civil rights and social justice agenda.⁵⁷

The Muslim World League, which undertakes a wide range of activities focused on the propagation of Islam, has offices in New York City and Falls Church, Va. (a Washington suburb), as well as one near Toronto. The World Assembly of Muslim Youth, which focuses primarily on promoting Islamic solidarity among Muslim teenagers and young adults in their early 20s, also has an office in Falls Church, Va.

Radical Islamist groups generally have less of a public profile in North America than they have in Europe. While it is likely that groups such as al-Qaeda have tried to recruit in the U.S., their influence is mostly inspirational. For example, the alleged perpetrator of the 2009 Fort Hood shootings in Texas, Nidal Malik Hasan, had e-mail contact with Anwar al-Awlaki, a dual U.S.-Yemeni citizen, thought to be living in Yemen, who is on a U.S. government list of terrorists. U.S. officials also have accused al-Awlaki of playing a "direct operational role" in an attempt by Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, the son of a prominent Nigerian banker, to blow up an airliner en route to Detroit on Christmas Day 2009.⁵⁸ Al-Shabab, a militant movement based in Somalia that has close ties to al-Qaeda, is reported to have sought recruits from the Somali-American community.

The radical but officially nonviolent Islamist group known as Hizb ut-Tahrir is thought to have a small presence in North America. The group sponsors conferences and online seminars to help promote its agenda, which is to establish a new era of Islamic rule through political means.

Traditional Sufi orders also maintain regional centers in the U.S., such as the Islamic Supreme Council of America and the As-Sunnah Foundation of America, both based in a suburb of Flint, Mich. These two organizations serve as the U.S. outreach and publishing wings of the Naqshbandi Haqqani Sufi order.

57 See MAS Freedom, "Muslim American Society Official Statement Concerning the Muslim Brotherhood as Approved by its Board of Trustees," http://www.masfreedom.org/official_release.

58 See, for example, Kimberly Dozier, "NCTC's Leiter says U.S. Yemeni cleric helped Christmas Day bomber attack Americans," The Associated Press, July 1, 2010, <http://www.washingtonexaminer.com/politics/ap/nctcs-leiter-says-us-yemeni-cleric-helped-christmas-day-bomber-attack-americans-97560539.html>.

The Tablighi Jama'at has a sizeable presence in North America, including a U.S. coordinating center, Al Falah Mosque in Queens, N.Y., which organizes trips by small groups of missionary preachers across the U.S. The primary purpose of these missionary groups is to encourage Muslims in the U.S. to be more devout rather than to convert non-Muslims to Islam. U.S. law enforcement personnel have raised concerns from time to time that some of the group's followers in the U.S. might have ties to radical groups such as al-Qaeda.⁵⁹

Networks of religious scholars also extend into North America. The al-Khoei Foundation, for example, has an office in Queens, N.Y. Another prominent network is the Fiqh Council of North America, an affiliate of ISNA, which describes itself as a group of Islamic scholars from the U.S. and Canada that offers advice on the application of Islamic legal principles. The views of religious scholar Yusuf al-Qaradawi feature prominently in the Council's deliberations by virtue of the fact that many of the group's senior figures are his close followers or former students.



⁵⁹ See, for example, Susan Sachs, "A Muslim Missionary Group Draws New Scrutiny in U.S." *The New York Times*, July 14, 2003, <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/07/14/us/a-muslim-missionary-group-draws-new-scrutiny-in-us.html>.

Appendix II: Glossary

Ayatollah

Title given to a senior-ranking Shiite religious scholar.

Caliphate

The line of the Prophet Muhammad’s successors as the temporal and spiritual leaders of Islam after his death in the 7th century. The caliphate existed in one form or another from 632 until 1924, when the Ottoman caliphate officially ended.

Cemaat

Turkish variation of Arabic word *ja’mat*, which means community.

Da’wa

Preaching or, literally, “calling” (or “inviting”) Muslims and non-Muslims to embrace Islamic beliefs and practices.

Deobandism

A conservative school of Sunni theology founded in the second half of the 19th century and named for a seminary outside of Delhi, India. Deobandism is influential among many European Muslims of South Asian heritage, particularly through the Tablighi Jama’at movement.

Fatwa

A ruling or legal opinion on Islamic law issued by an Islamic scholar.

Fiqh

Islamic jurisprudence based on study of the Quran and other sacred texts.

Halal

Something that is lawful and permitted in Islam. Often used to refer to Islamic dietary laws, which prescribe ritual slaughtering of beef and poultry, among other things.

Imam

Used by many Muslims today as a title for the prayer leader at a mosque and/or the spiritual leader of a Muslim community. But Shiites also use the term in a very different way, to refer to descendants of the Prophet Muhammad whom they consider his rightful successors.

Islamist

An advocate of Islamism, a political ideology that calls for the establishment of a distinctly Islamic system of government through the direct implementation of Islamic religious law (*shari'a*).

Jihad

An Arabic word that translates as “struggle” or “striving.” It is traditionally used by Muslims to describe an inward, spiritual struggle for holiness and good, though it is also commonly used to describe military action in the name of Islam.

Madrasa

A Muslim place of learning usually associated with a mosque.

Marja

Among Shiites, a religious figure seen as a living example of Islam to be followed and admired. Shortened form of the Arabic *marja' al-taqlid*, meaning “source of emulation.”

Murid

A Sufi devotee.

Murshid

A Sufi spiritual guide.

Salafism

A puritanical movement in Islam that emphasizes a conservative and literalist interpretation of scriptural sources. Literally followers of the *salaf as-salih*, or “pious predecessors,” Salafis emphasize exclusive reliance on the teachings of the early Muslims closest to the Prophet Muhammad. Classical Salafism is concerned almost exclusively with issues of creedal purity and the authenticity of scriptural sources, but in recent years Salafism has become cross-fertilized with overtly political groups.

Shari'a

The revealed and canonical laws of Islam.

Shaykh, sheikh or pir

The head of a Sufi order, generally a hereditary position, representing a spiritual genealogy tracking back to the Prophet Muhammad.

Shiism

One of the two main branches of Islam. The name is a shortened form of the historical term *Shia-t-Ali*, or “supporters of Ali,” and refers to one of the factions that emerged from a dispute over leadership succession soon after the death of the Prophet Muhammad in 632. Over time, the political divide between Shiites and Sunni Muslims broadened to include theological distinctions and differences in religious practice.

Sunni

The other main branch of Islam. Sunni Muslims make up at least 85% of the world's Muslim population. The name comes from *Ahl al-Sunna*, or “people of the tradition,” and refers to established norms for Muslim conduct based on the sayings and actions of the Prophet Muhammad.

Tariqat

Literally meaning “paths,” mystical orders or brotherhoods of Sufis.

Umma

The world community of Muslim believers.

Wahhabi

A variant of the broader Salafi movement in Islam that has grown globally in recent years. Wahhabism is the official doctrine of Saudi Arabia's religious establishment. It has its origins in the thinking of Muhammad Ibn Abdul Wahhab, an 18th century puritanical revivalist from central Arabia who formed an alliance with a forebear of the present Saudi ruling family.

Zhikr

Ritual chanting of God's attributes.