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Saturday, April 8, 2017 American Brotherhood The Muslim Brothers Are Present in the United States, But Not a Threat Peter Skerry

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assassination and terrorist attacks. But this long and blemished history does not necessarily mean that the contemporary Brotherhood is a terrorist organization. In the Arab nations where it has been rooted for generations, the Brotherhood today is <u>more of a social and cultural movement</u> ^[6] than a political party. And although the organization has <u>never articulated a principled position against violence</u> ^[7], neither has it relied primarily on violence to achieve its goals. Nevertheless, since the Egyptian military's 2013 coup against then President Mohamed Morsi's Brotherhood government, the new regime in Cairo, along with a few others in the region, has deemed the group a terrorist organization and urged Washington to do the same.

In the United States, the Brotherhood has never been directly tied to or involved with any terrorist threats or attacks, although some Islamists who have engaged in violent jihad against the country have gotten their start in foreign branches of the Brotherhood. Both Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, the <u>presumptive mastermind of the 9/11 attack</u> [8], and Mohamed Atta, one of its operational leaders, had been members of the Brotherhood—in Yemen and Egypt, respectively. And Hamas, which has in factbeen designated an FTO by the U.S. government and its allies, is the Palestinian affiliate of the Brotherhood. Hamas has never targeted Americans on U.S. soil, but it has pursued a policy of suicide bombings against Israeli civilians resulting in the death of at least one American. And until Washington cracked down after 9/11, Hamas also used the United States as a base for fundraising.

The American Brotherhood is not violent, but that is not to say—as Nathan Lean does in <u>The</u> <u>Islamophobia Industry</u> [9]—that "the Muslim Brotherhood does not exist in the United States." There is, to be sure, no organization in the United States today bearing the name the Muslim Brotherhood. There never has been. Yet since the 1950s and 1960s, when Muslims began arriving as students at U.S. universities, individual Muslim Brothers and the Brotherhood itself have been critical in the establishment of the country's various Islamic institutions and organizations. These include virtually all of the major entities representing Muslims in contemporary American politics: the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA), the Muslim Student Association (MSA), the Muslim Public Affairs Council (MPAC), the Muslim American Society (MAS), and the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR). As the <u>Encyclopedia</u> <u>of Islam in the United States</u> [10], edited by French scholar Jocelyne Cesari, concludes rather blandly, "The Muslim Brotherhood in the United States has played an influential part in shaping the public face of American Islam."!

HIDING IN PLAIN SIGHT

Today these Brotherhood-initiated organizations are the vanguard of the new generation of U.S.-born Muslims who are demanding their civil and religious rights as Americans. As Leila Ahmed of the Harvard Divinity School puts it in her 2011 book, <u>A Quiet Revolution [11]</u>, "Islamists and their heirs and children are for the present no more than a minority of a minority [of American Muslims]. However, controlling most American Muslim institutions, they constitute the most influential and most publicly visible segment of this minority. And they are also quite visibly and publicly the most socially and politically committed and activist segment of the Muslim community."

Consider the example of MAS. The society was founded in 1992, when immigrant Brothers from various countries realized that not only were they unlikely to be returning home but that they also needed to cease operating in the United States as separate national-origin groups (Iraqi Muslim Brothers, Egyptian Brothers, and so on) and come together in one Muslim Americanorganization. Today on its website, MAS declares itself to be "an independent American organization" that "has no affiliation with the Ikhwan al Muslimoon (Muslim Brotherhood or the Ikhwan) or with any other international organization." Nevertheless, the

in such circumstances, these Brothers would have been prone to all variety of brash, intemperate, and outrageous words, deeds, and fantasies.

Nor do these critics' writings contain any acknowledgment or awareness that in the intervening 20 to 30 or more years, youthful Islamist fantasies—especially those of typically geeky science and engineering students—might have changed or evolved. Assuming they did not return home, which many did, these young men likely obtained their degrees, got married, pursued reasonably successful careers, and raised families here. The available socio-economic data certainly confirm this trajectory. But even if their fundamental views or values had not changed, such life-experiences would foster new circumstances and bonds that would presumably complicate any inclinations to act on them.

Brotherhood there, such considerations arise with renewed force, especially as new Islamist leaders arrive here from the Middle East.

The Brotherhood's enduring penchant for secrecy and the inevitable deception that results might in theory be put in the service of genuinely threatening deeds. But in the United States at least these deeds have yet to materialize. Nonetheless, the organization's culture of concealment has led to pervasive corrosion of trust. This arises in Muslim families when husbands are instructed by the Brothers not to tell their wives about their activities in the organization; or in institutions, such as the mosque in Bridgeview, when groups of Brothers conspire to take control. Concealment creates confusion, anger, and division among Muslim Americans—a population already divided along an extraordinary array of sectarian, ethnic, and racial lines.

Such secrecy also tends to strain relations between Muslims and non-Muslims. For as Edward Shils pointed out sixty years ago in *The Torment of Secrecy,* his penetrating study of McCarthyism, in a nation of immigrants such as the United States, questions of loyalty naturally and inevitably arise. And the subsequent, m 559 542 I 559 521 I 55 521 IT 1suq m(n)

[18] https://www.the-american-interest.com/2011/07/01/the-americanization-of-islamism/ [19] https://www.amazon.com/Muslim-Brotherhood-Burden-Tradition/dp/0863564755/ref=sr_1_1?s=books& amp;ie=UTF8&qid=1491610252&sr=1-1& amp;keywords=the+muslim+brotherhood+the+burden+of+tradition